With the Best Intentions

by

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AUTHOR OF "Judith"

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A Midsummer Episode

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WITH THE BEST INTENTIONS:

A MIDSUMMER EPISODE.

CHAPTER I.

Bridal tours are so often failures — concealed or confessed — that Mrs. Emmett Morgan's testimony to the contrary in her case deserves honorable record.

"Three weeks of unalloyed happiness! And three more in prospect! I did not think mortals could be so entirely blissful!"

It was much for her to say. She was seldom demonstrative, and never effusive. At the voluntary admission her husband drew a step nearer and passed his arm about her.

Quietly and promptly she put it aside, her glance warning him that they were within possible view of others.

"Wemmick and Miss Skiffins!" commented the bridegroom, good humoredly.

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"I beg pardon?"

"Don't you recollect how his arm would steal around her waist, and how she as regularly undid it and laid it back on his lap?"

"I never heard of them. Was it in a book?"

"In 'Great Expectations'! Dickens again! You will think, after awhile, that I have read nothing else."

"Oh, no! but, as I have told you before, I cannot enjoy either of your pet authors. Are you vexed?"

He met her arch smile with one that answered her sufficiently.

"Vexed, my love! because you are a woman of independent thought instead of a slavish echo of myself? Variety of taste and sentiment gives spice to talk and life. We shall hardly quarrel over novels, — even my favorites."

Emmett was a sensible fellow, who had not failed to discover, in a two years' betrothal, that his chosen wife was intelligent rather than intellectual. She was a native of the flourishing town of Lisbon, New Jersey, and twenty-one years old when he met her abroad, travelling with her parents and

sister. A coalition of parties threw the young people into intimate companionship for four months. The equable temperament, sound good sense, and filial devotion of the girl, who was never tired, cross, or exacting, commended her first to his admiration, then to his affection. They returned home plighted lovers.

They had been married three weeks to a day on the afternoon when they stood together upon a balcony overlooking the noble veranda of the Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island, — the finest inland water-view upon the continent spread out beneath them. Below the hotel terrace a grove of arbor-vitæ and balsam-firs divided drive and tennis-courts from the Strait. Beyond this — the watery highway from Huron on the left to Lake Michigan on the right — a dark-blue, undulating line marked other islands and the mainland. For the rest, the land-locked seas had all the lower world to themselves. From eastern to western horizon they rolled — an expanse of varying glory, but always sublime; day unto day uttering and hinting prodigality and reserves of beauty inconceivable by those who have never looked upon the

divine panorama indescribable by the tongue or pen of those whose eyes have feasted upon the sight. From height above height, robed in fir and cedar, poured down the elixir of life, filling lungs to their depths and hurrying the reddening pulses until the recreated wanderers from the lowlands walked as upon air, and in spirit heard the recall to youth, strength, and hopeful endeavor.

Emmett Morgan squared his broad shoulders as he drew in the fragrant breeze.

"It is like iced Tokay!"

"I beg your pardon?" said his wife, again.

The startled look often came to her face in their talks. Hers was a clear mind, but shrewd and logical, rather than quick.

"Excuse me! I am slightly intoxicated, I believe. Did you ever breathe and taste such air?"

"It is very pure and bracing. It reminds me of the Engadine."

"But without the chill of everlasting snows. The atmosphere of the Engadine and Chamounix has been cooled in a refrigerator. This is made new every day. I have kept Mackinac for the beautiful climax of our honeymoon, sweet!"

"Thank you! How good you are to me always!"

She did not shake off the hand laid lightly upon the two crossed upon the balcony railing, or shrink now from the encircling arm. A sensitive flame wavered over her face, heightening her blush into bloom. She was not a pretty woman at her best, but always of a goodly presence. "Comely" and "wholesome" were words that arose first in the mind of an impartial critic. Six inches shorter than her husband, she bore herself so well as to seem almost as tall. The poise of her head, the straight, full figure, the spring and steadiness of her step, were her chief recommendations to casual eyes. She called her luxuriant locks red, and while leading off in ridicule of them, was secretly mortified at what she considered a personal blemish. In reality, it was a rich auburn, that would darken with years into the brown beloved by artists for the sombre shades and ruddy lights rarely seen in human hair. Emmett had given her an Irish setter last winter, because, as he insisted, the burnished silk of his coat exactly matched the waves and braids that crowned her head. Her eyes were full and

well-opened, honest and direct, with no shifting shadows to warn or confuse the observer, but in color they were neither gray, blue, black, nor brown. She described them as "light green," and, when kindled by sudden or strong emotion, they showed glints that justified the unflattering epithet.

In costume, her taste was irreproachable, and she had none more becoming than the gown of cream-white cashmere she now wore.

A burst of laughter from below, floating above the hum of voices and rhythmic beat of feet upon the floor of the veranda, diverted Emmett's eyes from the contentful contemplation of the figure beside him, and his wife's from the low sweep of the opposite shore.

In the wider area of the curve described by the upper end of the veranda, peopled at this hour with pleasure-seekers and graded invalids, was the group from which the blended peal of merriment had arisen. The central figure was the loveliest old lady imaginable. She leaned back in an easy-chair as if infirm; but the dark eyes, smooth skin, and regular features were less the traces of former beauty than the assurance of charms she would never

lose. Her hair, waving naturally under a lace cap, showed the merest glimmer of silver; her hands were exquisite in shape and delicacy of tint against her black silk gown. Behind her stood a handsome man of forty-five, or thereabouts, in the uniform of a U. S. A. Captain. At her right, and near her feet, sat a young fellow in regulation tennis-suit, cane-head at lip; behind him stood another, somewhat older, and in graver garb. Close beside the old lady's chair sat a brilliant brunette, her sparkling face uplifted toward the officer. Standing directly above the party, the Morgans could see the gleam of her perfect teeth, the dancing light in her eyes as she talked. She held and swayed, in accentuating her speech, a cluster of ferns and harebells, now and then brushing playfully the cheek of a girl who sat at her knee, looking up admiringly into the animated face.

"It is like a stage tableau," pronounced Mrs. Morgan, in critical admiration. "What a beautiful old lady! She looks like a bit of Dresden china. I suppose her daughters do *not* suspect how effectively they are posed!"

Emmett's fingers tightened upon hers, — his ejaculation struck sharply across her cool, measured sentences.

"I know that woman!"

He could hardly have been heard on the piazza, but the brunette looked up at that instant and saw him.

Clara Morgan was, as I have said, rather shrewd than quick of apprehension, but she was observant and retentive. She recollected distinctly in after-days what she was scarcely conscious at the moment that she saw, — the mingling of recognition, surprise, pain, and pleasure in the eloquent look that leaped to meet Emmett's, — a glance so vivid and rapid that she was positively dizzy as she turned to her husband for explanation. He had changed color, — she recollected that, too, in that after-time, — but he smiled gayly in leaning over the rail to wave a salute. The woman below had started to her feet with impetuosity that directed the attention of her companions to the upper balcony. She advanced a few paces and smiled radiantly.

"Will you come down?" Her voice "carried" so well over the heads of the prom-

enaders that none of them halted to stare, yet the couple above heard the words.

Emmett bowed acquiescence, and drew his wife within the room behind them.

"If you don't mind, dear," — he said, in deferential appeal. "It is Mrs. Gillette and her daughter, — old and dear friends of mine. I shall be glad to have you know them. Is this your shawl?"

Involuntarily Clara spoke and moved more deliberately than usual, because he talked fast and seemed excited. She had long ago established to her satisfaction the fact that she must be his balance-wheel, and held herself ever ready to report for duty.

"It will always gratify me to meet your friends," — with precisely the right inflection and emphasis. "That is my ulster, my dear! I will get a shawl."

She selected, leisurely, one from several in the tray of her trunk; and, with it over her arm, led the way down the corridor. On the stairway she observed, with a slight smile: —

"Am I to infer from your agitation that this is an early flame of yours?"

She put it plainly, and in less refined phrase than he would have expected had

he had time to think. He glanced at her quickly.

"Never, I assure you! Except that all of us fellows considered adoration of Karen Gillette a part of our curriculum. Her father was one of our professors. I must have mentioned the family to you?"

"No. I should not have forgotten the daughter's name. *What* do you call her?"

"She was actually christened 'Karenhappuch' for her grandmother, who left her fifty thousand dollars as a consequence."

"The money was dearly earned." Clara's short upper lip curled. "Yet her mother looks refined and sensible."

"She is the sweetest saint out of heaven! I can never forget her goodness to me, — a green country boy. She gave me the run of her house, — a liberal education in itself."

"With permission to adore her handsome daughter?"

The shortening upper lip, more than tone and words, provoked the young husband to the first hasty word she had ever heard from him.

"Don't be absurd, Clara! I have kept nothing in my past back from you."

They were in the thick of the swim below by now, threading their way through the brilliant, shifting throng filling the rotunda, halls, and veranda. The band was playing in the gallery of the dining-room, the doors of which were opened as they passed. There was no opportunity for further discussion.

Nobody — much less a right-hearted, right-mannered young woman, brought up to reverence age — could be stiff with the gracious old lady, who held Clara's hand in hers while she thanked Emmett for bringing his bride down to them.

"He was one of my best-beloved boys," said the gentle voice. "I can promise that he will be a good husband. Not that you need the guarantee, but the testimony of an old friend is worth something."

"Don't monopolize her, Mater," interposed the daughter. "She grows more discriminating and more greedy of the best things every year, Emmett. And you know that she was never generous to us lesser beauties."

"I recollect her weakness — and ours!" Emmett promptly followed suit. "Clara, I must have you know my old friend — Karen!"

There was a perceptible halt before he brought out the word laughingly and apologetically. Mrs. Gillette came to his help.

"My daughter, Mrs. Dumaresque, my dear Mrs. Morgan, — whom you must allow your husband to call by the old boy-and-girl name. Let me introduce my young friend, Miss Manly. Captain Dale, Mrs. Morgan! Mr. Gates! Mr. Romeyn!"

The stately grace of the little ceremony put all at their ease. Recovering from the bow bestowed upon the last-named personage, Clara found herself face to face with Mrs. Dumaresque, whose eyes were fixed upon her with new interest.

"Ah! I was sure we had met before, and that I owed you something. As usual, instinct is wiser than reason. Mother, do you not recognize your benefactress of ten days ago? Do you forget that but for her self-denying kindness you would have faced the fashionable world of Niagara with the grime of a night's travel upon you, without the chance to rub out a single wrinkle of the dozens left by the pillows of a Wagner car berth?"

"I do recollect the face," — Mrs. Gillette regarded it affectionately, — "and am glad to

owe the benefit to the wife of my old favorite. You must know" — turning to Emmett — "that I am seventy-three years old, and, as this rattlepate intimates, looked at least eighty that morning, when four healthy young girls persisted in keeping possession of the dressing-room, one at a time, for nearly an hour. Mrs. Morgan stood next in the *queue* outside, and generously yielded her place to me. It was one of the little kindnesses that circumstance converts into signal favors."

Clara colored deeply at the discovery that made her the conspicuous figure of the group, yet there was pleasure in the distinction.

"It was not worth mentioning or recollecting," she said, with simple courtesy, that became her well. "I had plenty of time for even such an elaborate toilette as the quartette of young ladies considered necessary, for we were going on to Detroit, and I overheard you speak of stopping at Niagara."

The little party broke up presently. Captain Dale was "due at the Fort," and made his courtly adieux after asking permission to call upon the newly arrived pair. Mr. Romeyn accompanied him down the veranda;

Mr. Gates walked away with Miss Manly. The tide of life was setting strongly in the direction of the *salle-à-manger*.

"And seeing and breathing are not dining, — even at Mackinac," remarked Mrs. Dumaresque, plaintively. "A balsamic zephyr is not a bad first course, but, as a *pièce de résistance*, a choice sunset is *not* a success. It is philosophical to submit to necessity. Mater, shall we go in to dinner?"

Clara had her temper in such control as to be but remotely conscious that she had one. It was not, therefore, that plebeian and unrighteous element which gave her the sense of a reversal of currents when Emmett inquired innocently, on the way to the dining-hall, if it were possible to secure two seats at the same table with the mother and daughter.

This meeting with her husband's former friends was the first break upon the delicious *solitude à deux* which (when a bridal tour is not a failure) is the lobby leading direct through an ajar and widening gate into Eden. The opening narrowed to a tantalizing crack at her bridegroom's disposition to admit others into the sacred enclosure. She

liked society and eligible acquaintances as much as any one, but it might give rise to inconvenience and annoyance — it would certainly hamper their movements were they to attach themselves to any party as yet. It was unlike Emmett's habitual consideration for her comfort to make it impossible for her to object to a proposition that might well be obnoxious to her.

Mrs. Dumaresque sent a quick interrogative look at the impassive face behind which this train of reasoning went on, before answering.

"I dare say it might be contrived. That is, if you really wish it."

"Certainly we do! It will be a charming arrangement — at least to us. There is no drearier desert than the eating-room of a monster hotel, where one has not an acquaintance among the hundreds who flock in empty and go away full. Eh, Clara?"

Was the man carried out of himself by the thrilling excitement of an encounter with a couple of women who brought back his college days? The balance-wheel turned steadily upon its pivotal centre.

"It would, as you say, be a charming arrangement for us, always providing it does

not inconvenience your friends. We must not trespass upon their kindness."

The neatly trimmed conventionality fitted exactly into place, and masculine wit detected no friction.

Mrs. Dumaresque paused in the door of the banqueting-hall to speak to the princely functionary stationed there.

"Have I sufficient interest at court to get places at our table for our friends?" was her way of wording the request.

"Assuredly, Madame, if you desire it. I will see to it myself."

He led the way down the long room, filled now with the incense of savory food, the tinkle of silver upon china, the tramp of waiters, and babble of a thousand voices, and seated the party with dignity and despatch.

The phrase was Mrs. Dumaresque's. One of her countless individualisms was the use of such. Apt epithets and telling turns of speech slipped from her tongue as commonplaces from the lips of the average woman. Another of what Clara already began to note as her "ways," was the bestowal upon all who served her, in whatever capacity, acknowledgment which was gracious, and

seemed grateful. Her bow and smile to the accomplished official who had granted her request might have sent a cabinet minister away happy. Unsuspecting (and obtuse) Emmett, throwing himself zestfully into the bright rapids of reminiscence and persiflage that beguiled the tedium of changing courses, would have been stricken into dumbness of amazement had he read the verdict gradually formulated in the mind that, like most deliberate and conscientious intellects, seldom changed an opinion.

Clara, appearing to listen with a fixed half-smile, which denoted the precise degree of indulgent amusement at graceful nonsense she could not, if she would, and would not if she could, emulate, listening appreciatively with white lids down-dropped over honest eyes she could not quite trust, had never looked prettier, thought her proud husband. The soft dazzle from moonlike globes brought out red-gold reflections in her wealth of tresses; the heat of the room enriched her complexion; the ample folds of her creamy draperies were still and statuesque; her demeanor was calm and dignified beyond her years.

"What a contrast to these chattering dolls!" thought the happy fellow, losing the point of Mrs. Dumaresque's best epigram in a comprehensive survey of the five hundred-and-odd inferior women near and distant. "And Mrs. Gillette and Karen are just the people to understand her."

His divinity lost not a glance or syllable of her vivacious *vis-a-vis*, least of all those directed at Emmett and Messrs. Gates and Romeyn, who made up the party of six at the round table. Before the meal was nearly over, her judgment and the evidence supporting it were epitomized and committed to the keeping of her tenacious memory.

"A brilliant, flippant — probably a designing — MAN'S WOMAN!"

CHAPTER II.

THE supreme beauty of that first evening upon The Fairy Isle was something the wash of years could not efface from the memories of the four who reassembled upon the veranda after dinner.

The pure white sickle of the new moon, her delicately pointed tips defined to the uttermost taper in the crystalline atmosphere, was poised over a band of tinted vapor, dusky crimson above, and shading into warm gray that met and melted into the colder gray of the water-line. Not another cloud was abroad in all the vast dome shutting down closely and lovingly about the paradise of lake and island. Against the horizon arose straight streaks of smoke, graceful and tenuous, from scores of steam-craft and remoter forest-fires. The broad breast of the encompassing waters palpitated with light. There was a nameless and mysterious look of glad expectation in the smile it returned to the

bending sky. Strange radiance, not to be traced to the paling west, brought near the mainland towns of Cheboygan and St. Ignace: defined every twig and deepened every hollow of the arbor-vitæ grove, washed into gorgeousness of color the red roofs and gamboge walls of the houses in the lower village, and set panes of ruby and topaz in the summer cottages on the cliff-shoulders beyond the *caravansérai* buildings.

"Pearl and princess of islands!" Mrs. Dumaresque's voice, so thrilling-sweet and low, that Clara did not recognize it, ended the rapt silence. "Who will help me to words worthy of her?"

"'The Holy Jerusalem, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband, having the glory of GOD, her light like unto a stone most precious, it as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal.'"

At the accents, hardly louder than a sigh of ecstatic anticipation, the tears sprang to Clara's eyes. Instinctively, her hand moved to touch that which lay on the arm of the speaker's chair, and met, instead, the daughter's nervous fingers clasping her mother's in a simultaneous impulse.

"Don't, darling!" said her rapid undertone. "You will be one of the twelve white angels, I know, but don't break my heart by reminding us of it. The Mater gets the best of us all — every time!" she continued, in her wonted key. "Nobody else can be so confidently depended upon for bringing forth treasures, new and old, in the exact nick of opportunity. Not that we would not have thought of that passage from the sacred classic in the course of an hour or so, — given leisure for reflection. That we did not is mere accident. But the fact remains that we did *not*."

Clara had withdrawn her hand with a motion that made it uncertain whether or not her intention had been to settle the folds of her gown, and altered the position of her chair to command a wider view. At the same moment she changed the conversation civilly, but decidedly.

"It is singular that Mackinac is so little known at the East as a summer resort," she remarked, in her neatest style. "I suppose because it has so few historical associations, — nothing, indeed, to commend it to the tourist except the air, the scenery, and the

fishing. Every new place must win its way into popular favor. And there is a feeling at the East that everything west of Niagara is crude and rough."

An uncomfortable pause ensued. Emmett was mortified, the others surprised at crass ignorance that was yet pardonable in the product of a system which educates by means of text-books, and deifies precedent.

Mrs. Dumaresque arose to the occasion.

"Thank you, Mrs. Morgan! I have been, within eight days, so crushed by the shields and bracelets of superior information, — have so grovelled and groaned in the humiliation of positive know-nothingism as to this, the centre and pride of national historic grounds, that I embrace you in spirit as a sister in misfortune. Not that the people who ban us are much wiser than we. I dare say, if the truth were known," — turning severely upon Emmett, — "that this man who took a college-first twelve years ago could not tell us for his life the name of the first white man who set eye and foot upon Mackinac Island — or the date of the discovery?"

He did know, having "read up" on the subject during a former visit. Appreciating

the generous ruse of his whilom comrade, he made an embarrassed laugh do for reply.

"I knew it!" triumphantly. "Then — in case somebody more erudite should catechise you — please make a note to the effect that John Nicolet, a French explorer, circumnavigated the island in 1634. That was fourteen years after your Pilgrim forbears moored their bark where, by the way, there is not, and wasn't then, more than one rock, and that not big enough for the narrowest possible binding for the stern shore. Thirty-one years after Nicolet's voyage, in 1665, Perrot, another Frenchman (the French are always busybodies) was interpreter and trader between his countrymen and the Indians, on what a Church writer of 1670 calls 'the famous Island of Missilimackinac.' The Indians, being a leisurely and lazy race off the war-path, could indulge their taste for polysyllables. Four years later, Claude Allouez, a Jesuit priest, founded the first Christian parish in this heathen region. Had you ever heard *that?*" menacingly.

"Don't you mean Marquette?"

"Distinctly, I do *not* mean Marquette! He never saw Missilimackinac (with your

permission we will drop the 'missile') until 1671 — some say 1673. They found his grave over there at St. Ignace" — pointing — "more than two hundred years afterward."

Leaning back in her rocking-chair, her eyes upon the spires and chimneys of St. Ignace, now fading into gray indistinctness, she resumed, presently, as in a reverie: —

"The Jesuit missionaries held the Cross high and bravely for the next thirty years. The French supplied the Aborigines with firearms, the English with firewater. Iroquois, Hurons, and Ottawas made a slaughter-pen of the little island. The soil is planted as thick with bones and skulls as a potato-patch with "eyes." More than one plan of massacre was discovered and thwarted by the Christian Fathers — such a handful of pale heroes among red demons!"

"We do not, as a rule, speak of the propagators of a false faith as heroes!" commented Clara, in dryness shot with pietism. "The Christian Fathers referred to were, I take it, Roman Catholics."

"Probably." — In the same breath, but with an abrupt return to her former tone of saucy banter. — "Confess, Sir Ignoramus!

haven't I confounded you with my array of statistical, historical, and ecclesiastical lore? *Entre nous*, I shall have forgotten it all by to-morrow. Our *cicerone*, an intelligent Frenchman, and for over thirty years a resident of the Island, primed me with it only this morning, and I entered the dates in my notebook. Hence this display of facts and authorities. We go to St. Ignace to-morrow in the afternoon boat to be further imbued."

Clara hearkened as to a foreign tongue. The chronological summary she rated as cheap display of superficial knowledge; the disclaimer succeeding it was, to her notion, in worse taste still. The fluent, rolling periods bewildered her. She could not decide if the rhodomontades, which amused Emmett to an irrational degree, were affectation, or a trick that had become second nature. Mrs. Gillette belonged to a different school. She would be an ornament to the choicest society, even to the innermost ring of the "best people" in Lisbon, New Jersey. Her daughter resembled her as a blue-jay a dove, or a nasturtium a lily.

"To St. Ignace! May we join the party?" cried Emmett, with the fatal facility

of his sex in multiplying blunder by blunder, with a product of irrevocable feminine discomfiture. "We should then begin the history of the Island and vicinity at the right end, with the added advantage of your familiarity with legend and fact. You see we know next to nothing. That is."—struck by something unsympathetic in the set of his wife's head upon the shaft-like neck, and the steadiness of her scrutiny of the sand-bars Round Island holds out as if praying for mercy from the incoming waves, showing at this hour and in the fantastic light like faintly illuminated exclamation points,—"I make confession for myself without implicating my wife."

Clara's head turned slowly. The patented semi-smile was obedient to her summons.

"My confession of abject ignorance preceded yours. But does it occur to you, my dear Emmett, that it would be criminally selfish to inflict such a combination upon better-informed people. We have agreed, you know, not to oblige others to readjust plans of travel and pleasure on our account. And, excuse me,—but this proposition of yours does seem to me like *such* an imposition!"

It was all she dared say. She felt that it ought to be enough. Her voice was somewhat high-pitched, and only held from shrillness by careful management: her enunciation was punctilious. The only effect of emotion upon her tone was to thin it slightly. In entering the civil deprecation she laughed just enough to mark her appreciation of the humor of the situation in which her husband's thoughtlessness had placed themselves and their friends.

To the sweet old gentlewoman at her side, amusement and demur were fit and pretty.

"My love!" she said, passing her hand lightly and caressingly down the arm of her favorite's wife. "You must not deny us the privilege of being of a little service to you. My worldly-minded child here has been pining for a new sensation for three days. Fate is propitious in supplying such an addition to our party. You cannot impose upon us by giving us as much of your time and company as you can spare from each other. We do not want to be *de trop*, but come to us when you will. The more we see of you, the better for us."

Clara's little laugh, modified by deferential gratitude, was offered as a prelude to her reply.

"You are only too kind, but you must not let us interfere with the least of your arrangements."

"Dear Mrs. Dumaresque! We are a committee!"

"Ambassadors on a mission!"

"Petitioners to Her Majesty!"

Onslaught and chorus came from a party led by Miss Manly and Mr. Gates. Two other couples were close upon their heels. The six explained, first in concert, then in successive disjointedness, that a drawing-room full of admirers had deputed them to entreat Mrs. Dumaresque to favor them with a recitation.

"Mr. Waller will sing, and Mr. Bagley play, if you will set them the example of gracious compliance with our request," said the breathless girl. "They will have the best wine first, they say. They demand payment in advance."

"Am I coin of the realm?" queried Mrs. Dumaresque, but yielding to the gentle violence with which her young votary urged

her to rise. "Or do you offer me as a negotiable note to the Shylocks who will give you no credit?"

It was certainly not wit, decided Clara, which the embassy applauded, Mr. Romeyn offering his arm with the suggestion that she should "at once be put into circulation." They carried her off, after respectful apology to her mother, who, to Clara's surprise, appeared to enjoy the scene.

"It is a preconcerted affair," she said to the Morgans. "I suspected something of the sort when I noticed how fast the crowd of promenaders was thinning. This is not a 'hop-night,' and pleasure-topers must devise some entertainment. You must go, too. No," — as they lingered, — "I do not mind being left here alone, and the crowd and heat would be too much for me. I want you to hear Karen again, Emmett. You recollect her talent for recitation? She has improved it carefully of late years."

She was in mid-recitation when husband and wife had worked their way to the threshold of the door nearest her. Mrs. Emmett Morgan was a graduate of a celebrated Seminary for Young Ladies, situated

in Lisbon, and therefore a judge of elocution and other appurtenances of Higher Education for Women. Her frame of mind, on this occasion, was judicial, her temper braced and clamped to patient endurance of "the usual hotel reading." She admitted mentally, at the end of two minutes' listening, that the exhibition was "as nearly ladylike as such a public affair could be." There was no mouthing, no contortion of feature, and as little gesticulation as was compatible with an intense, forceful rendering of Gabriel Dante Rossetti's weird poem, "Sister Helen," — given by request.

In response to the importunate "encore" she accorded a selection Clara had never heard before. As the regal figure stepped again upon the improvised dais at the head of the great room, silence that could be felt descended upon the crowd. Before she uttered a word, she had passed in spirit away from sight and sound of her audience. The wistful eyes looked over and beyond the sea of heads to snowy-browed Sierras, her nostrils dilated slightly, and lips parted to inhale breezes wild with the sweep across a hundred leagues of treeless prairie.

"I want free life, and I want free air!
And I sigh for the canter after the cattle,
The crack of the whips like shot in a battle,
The *mêlée* of horns and hoofs and heads,
That wars and mangles and scatters and spreads,
The green beneath and the blue above,
And dash and danger — "

Thus far, passionately impatient of enclosing walls; of the glare of electric lights and stifling atmosphere; disdainful of the throng that hemmed her about, and the eyes focused upon the pale exaltation of her face. Midway in the impetuous alliteration she paused, the dark fringes of her lids fell over dewy eyes, every facial line unbent; in her voice resonance flowed into liquid sweetness in slow, lingering enunciation: —

"And life and love —
And — Lasca!"

There was stillness while one might count twenty before the rich voice took up the tale, recounting it as if it were her own, smile chasing shadow over her face, until a deeper silence dropped like a cloud upon the listeners with —

"Lasca was *dead!*"

Then, without the lift of a finger, with scarcely a rise or fall of the monotone fraught with sorrow, longing, and dull despair, — the rest was told: —

"I gouged out a grave a few feet deep,
And there in Earth's arms I laid her to sleep;
And there she is lying, and no one knows;
And the summer shines and the winter snows;
For many a day the flowers have spread
A pall of petals over her head;
And the little gray hawk hangs aloft in the air,
And the shy coyoté trots here and there,
And the black snake glides and glitters and slides
Into a rift in a cottonwood tree;
And the buzzard sails on,
And comes and is gone,
Stately and still, like a ship at sea, —
And I wonder why I do not care
For the things that are like the things that were, —
Does half my heart lie buried there,
In Texas, down by the Rio Grande?"

In the sway and stir that followed the concluding line, a voice asked, almost in Clara's ear: —

"Who is she?"

"A Mrs. Demarest, from New York. A rich widow and a belle. Fine — wasn't it?"

"Demar*est* — did you say?"

The Morgans moved to escape from the crowd as he spoke, and Clara confronted the speaker. He was tall, his hair and moustache were slightly grizzled; his port was unmistakably military, and there was a scar, like that left by a sabre-gash, across the left lower jaw. She noted these particulars in one passing glance; then both men were absorbed by the crowd.

"I heard some one call your friend, Mrs. Dumaresque, 'a rich widow and a belle' this evening," Clara said to her husband that night. "I suppose, then, that her affliction is not recent? She wears black lace, too, and that doesn't follow very close upon weeds. Did you know her husband? Who was he? How long has he been dead?"

Emmett stooped to kiss her — unreproved, there being no spectators — with an amused smile.

"So black lace ought not to tread upon the heels of widow's weeds! Live and learn! I never saw Karen Gillette's husband. He was an army man, a captain, I believe, and, I have heard, was strikingly handsome. What was query No. 4? Oh! I do not know when he died. 'In point of fact,' as Cousin Feenix

would say, I did not know that she was a widow until to-night — poor girl! Nor did I know that she is a belle. She deserves to be, for she is something much better, — a noble, true, genuine woman, and as such, capable of appreciating *my wife*."

CHAPTER III.

MRS. MORGAN was pleased to find the hotel veranda nearly deserted when she and her husband came out to stroll in the fresh air before breakfast. Besides themselves and a dyspeptic old gentleman taking a solemn constitutional, the only other occupants of the breezy spaciousness were six prospective fishermen in rough garb, packing lines, reels, and fly-hooks for an excursion.

"Nine rounds make a measured mile," remarked the dyspeptic, wheezingly, to Emmett, as the two young people fell into step for a rapid walk. "The fact should be conspicuously placarded, sir, for the convenience and comfort of guests — *placarded!*"

They left him muttering in his beard.

"A professional grumbler!" said Emmett. "No hotel is complete without him!"

"Poor man!" sighed Clara. "To be unhappy *here*, on such a morning!"

A silver-gray dawn, cool, and lovely with haze and dreamy distances, had ushered in "a blue day." Pale-blue reaches of shorelines; clearest, tenderest azure above, with intervening fleets of cumulus clouds, melting into gray-blue edges, sailing eastward, like squadrons of swans and cygnets; deep, bright blue waters, dimplingly alive to the glorious truth of a new morrow — was the further outlook. From the heart of the arbor-vitæ grove, the thousand fine streams of a fountain, tossed against the wind, drifted and swayed tanglingly in the tree-tops, and, shattered into fine snow, sifted away into nothingness. The break of the waves upon the gravelly beach, the dash of the advance, the rush and hiss of the retreat, kept time to the rise, fall, and float of the fountain spray.

Emmett noted that his wife was too much absorbed in the fairness of the scene, too exultant in the response of youth and happiness to the vivifying rush of the air, laden with ozone and sparkle, to see — that the fishermen looked after her admiringly as she passed. Her gait was elastic and free; her proud head, fresh color, and glad eyes were mute revelation of fulness of enjoyment of

life and her present environment. She was a noble creature — unspoiled, high-souled, superb in physique, pure in heart — and all *his!*

"GOD make and keep me worthy of her!" the young husband said, inwardly, in happy humility.

Clara smiled up into his eyes at that second, confidingly yet näively, unconscious of the trend of his thought.

"What are you thinking of?"

"Of you, my love! Of you only!"

She believed it so fully that a prismatic film swam over water, sky, and islands when she looked abroad. Each hour was more blessed than the last. Her cup was full, and there were no cloudy lees in the bright wine.

A man accosted Emmett respectfully on their ninth beat.

"This is Mr. Morgan, I believe? I was told in the office that you wished to see me."

It was the accomplished *cicerone* recommended by Mrs. Dumaresque; and while the two men arranged the details of the drive projected for the morrow, Clara strolled into the rotunda. To the left of the main en-

trance was a square room enclosed on three sides only. Two windows looked upon the veranda; a fire crackled in the wide grate. Opposite this was the conventional bazaar for the sale of Indian curiosities, stationery, newspapers, cigars, and novels.

Struck by a felicitous idea, Clara bought a copy of Miss Woolson's *Anne*, and ordered it to be sent to her room; then, seeing Emmett still busy with the Frenchman, she bethought herself further to make inquiry concerning the mails. The "office" was at the rear of the rotunda, and the register lay open upon the counter close beside her.

She had just put her question to the clerk in charge when some one ran down the stairs behind her, walked up to the counter, and began turning the leaves of the big book. His movements were so abrupt, and he was so near, that the bride, to whose apprehension familiarity was insult, drew away and glanced at him defensively.

It was the man she had seen last evening, after the recitation of "Lasca," and who had asked the reader's name. He was scanning the scrawled pages intently, his finger hurrying down a column of arrivals ten days old.

Clara saw the date just as the index finger stopped: —

Mrs. Gillette,
Mrs. Dumaresque, } *New York City,*

were the bracketed names written boldly in a woman's hand. The stranger drew an audible breath between his teeth; then, looking up, met Mrs. Morgan's eye, and became uncomfortably aware that she was penned in against the counter by himself and two men who had backed toward them in getting out of the way of passers-by.

"Excuse me!" uttered the offender, in civil concern, bowing and moving aside to let her escape.

The way was blocked again, — now by two of the fishermen, creels and rod-cases in hand.

"We are only waiting for you, Major!" Clara heard, in gliding between the groups, her cheeks hot, her heart beating faster than the occasion warranted. None are such sticklers for the unwritten proprieties as the provincial *élite*, and Mrs. Morgan, with all the education gained at the celebrated Lisbon Seminary, and in months of foreign travel, bore still the down of self-consciousness, and was subject to the punctilious dreads of the

provinces. Individualism flourishes apace in village and township, and nothing grows faster in the opportunity there allowed for expansion of trait and idiosyncrasy than self-conceit.

The bridal pair spent the morning in the open air, sauntering aimlessly for awhile, finally establishing themselves in a cozy nook formed by a clump of balsam firs, a dozen yards or so from the brow of a precipitous cliff.

"I mean to begin a course of current literature," Clara announced, when Emmett had finished his cigar, lying, more in English than American style, on the rough herbage at her feet, his arms pillowing his head, his whole being steeped in lazy content. "Of course light reading was forbidden at school, and social duties have left me little time for it since. I bought *Anne* this morning — you recollect that Mrs. Gillette spoke of it last night — for you to read aloud while I am at work. That is — unless you object?"

Object? Could he be anything but grateful for a scheme suggested by her wish to assimilate her own to his views and tastes? After all, your rational woman is more due-

tile in love's hands than the pretty simpleton who professes to have no will apart from her husband's!

They read *Anne* all that golden, balmy forenoon, the winds whispering in the balsam covert, hiding them from the public road; the lap! lap! of the waters, a hundred feet below, joining in musical subtones to Emmett's voice. Clara had taken from her work-bag a bit of embroidery, dainty, intricate outlining in buff silk upon a paler ground. "Something toward housekeeping," she said to her delighted spouse.

She looked busily happy whenever he glanced at her in turning a leaf. For himself, he asked nothing more of earth — or of heaven — were it possible to carry on this drama of innocent domestic blessedness to life's close. He seemed to have been born and lived for two and thirty years only that he might come to this time and place.

So they read *Anne* steadily for three beatific hours, Emmett deeply interested, Clara mildly indulgent of the author's penchant for impecunious dreamers like William Douglas, and raw girls in island-made gowns, with a tal-

ent for griddle-cakes, self-devotion, and vocal music.

Now and then the reader paused to pencil an interrogation point in the margin.

"That we may identify localities," he explained. "Mr. Lachance can show us the Old Agency House, and other points of interest — and the Gillettes must be familiar with most of the places mentioned here."

"You always speak of 'the Gillettes,' — as if the daughter were a secondary personage. She seems to me to overshadow the gentle mother."

"It is unintentional, then. There was never a more devoted child. I got into the habit of saying 'The Gillettes' in old times."

He resumed the interrupted passage: —

"'Later in the evening, when the moon was shining brightly, and she was on her way home from the Church-house with Rast, she saw a sledge moving toward the northern point.'"

At the end of the dialogue that closed the chapter, Clara became critical.

"I can see, already, how the story will end. That young Pronando will be engaged to

Anne. He is bright, and will go out into the world and grow. She is slow-witted, and will continue to live on the Island, and make excellent coffee, and translate Latin as conscientiously, but not so creditably, and vegetate and gain flesh as she gets older, until she is no better than a cabbage or a Ruta-baga turnip. He will either be honorable and wretched in marrying her, or dishonorable and judicious and break the engagement. She will be the Island saint — if he doesn't marry her — settle that little weasel of a sister and her monkeyfied brothers in life, and take up her abode in the Church-house with Miss Lois, who will live to be a hundred."

"Bravo!" cried Emmett. "Capital! As good as one of Bret Harte's condensed novels!"

"That is my objection to novels," continued Clara, complacently. "They are not pictures of real life, but machines, and the actors are marionettes. There must be adventures, intrigues, elopements, hair-breadth escapes, broken hearts, and ugly scandals — even among decent people. Now, such things don't occur in respectable and refined families. But I suppose a novel that de-

scribed every-day life as it is, and as we know it, would be a stupid affair."

While he went on with the next chapter, she let her hands rest on her work, and watched some object upon the lake. Presently she checked him.

"Wait a moment — please! Why do you suppose that little yacht — the one with the red pennant — has lain just there ever since we have been here? Isn't it the one that took out the fishing-party from the hotel? I noticed the red streamer when you pointed the boat out to me from the piazza after breakfast."

Emmett adjusted his field-glass and brought it to bear upon the yacht.

"What eyes and wits you have! It is the very same. There is a party of Chicago men on board, bound to Carp River and Les Chenaux — they call it "The Snows," hereabouts. Some accident has happened to the sails or cordage, or something" — speaking in the deliberate, disconnected way peculiar to one whose eyes, by help of artificial agents, have borne his thoughts to a remote point.

Put a spy-glass to the eye of the most material of men, and he leaves his body

with you while he goes forth with his mind.

"The crew are busy mending it," pursued Emmett, abstractedly. "The yacht lies so near land that we can see every face. This is a splendid glass. Would you like to take a peep?"

"They take the mishap very coolly," observed Clara, lapsing likewise into the ruminative in altering the focus to suit her vision. "The sailors may be busy, but the passengers are having a good time with their cigars, and —" stiffening into virtuous severity — "*bottles!* Oh!"

"What is it?" asked Emmett, enjoying the change in her visage, attributing it, as he did, wholly to disapprobation of the scene he had mischievously brought to her sight. Clara affected not to hear the query, in her absorption in the vessel and occupants. Secretly she was ashamed of her exclamation and its cause. Why should she be startled when a man lounging on the guards turned so as to bring his features in line with the lens? She saw him very plainly, and at her leisure, as he removed the white visor-cap to screen the cigar he was lighting. His eyes

were deep-set and dark: his hair was less gray than his moustache: the face was good and kind, albeit grave to pensiveness when at rest. She almost believed that she could trace the scar that made a diagonal seam across the lower jaw.

Shaking off the odd shiver the sight of him and the inexplicable familiarity she already felt with his personality gave her, she said, indifferently: —

"There is the officer who stood behind us last night while Mrs. Dumaresque was reciting. He was hunting for her name in the register this morning. At least, his finger stopped at it, and he caught his breath as if surprised."

Emmett laughed again.

"What a woman! How do you know he is an officer? And why might he not have been looking for the signature of a sheriff's officer, or a creditor, and his sigh one of relief at not finding it?"

"I heard his friends call him Major"; Clara picked up her embroidery and spoke sedately. "I can tell you something else that may surprise you. He feels peculiar interest in your fascinating friend. Nothing

is more likely than that she should marry again. When a widow lays by her weeds, she must expect to be regarded as a single woman."

Emmett had grown serious.

"I doubt if poor Karen would care to repeat an unfortunate experiment. Her marriage was not happy, or so I have heard. The fellow must have been a thorough scamp. With all her seeming frivolity, she has one of the sweetest, most generous tempers ever bestowed upon a woman, and a deep, warm, faithful heart. I cannot imagine how any one except a brute could maltreat her."

He was gazing thoughtfully — perhaps wistfully — out upon a smiling expanse of waters. The pretty yacht, the red pennant fluttering like a danger signal, rocked and swung in the trough of the swells now deepening into shorter waves.

"I can never forget how gallantly she stood by me once or twice. I owe it to her influence with her father that I was not expelled from college for a mad prank."

Clara looked surprised and hurt.

"I thought you had always been steady?"

"Never *un*steady, perhaps," laughing anew at her alarmed tone. "But prankish. Ask Karen about some of my escapades."

"As if I would discuss your failings with any one — much less a stranger!"

Emmett reached over to kiss her hand.

"Loyal little wife!"

With a very sober countenance Clara began to set buff stitches upon the paler ground. Before a wife can join heartily in her lord's enthusiasm for another woman, she must be very sure of his fealty to herself and very much attached to the person lauded. Clara was sure of Emmett's love, but thus far she was not even attracted towards Mrs. Dumaresque. In fact, as she stitched her nameless disquiet into the pale buff fabric, she was pondering the probabilities that Captain Dumaresque might not have been wholly to blame for the "unfortunate" result of their union. Brilliant women seldom make exemplary wives. Above all, she was annoyed at the thought that the man in whose unsmirched record she felt such worthy pride had narrowly shunned open disgrace, and that through this other woman's mediation. Yet Mrs. Gillette had called him one of her best "boys"! Had these women of the world a different code of right and wrong from hers? It would be absurd to

call Emmett to account, at this late day, for college scrapes, but she did feel that she should not have been kept in ignorance of them so long. She hoped, in silent fervor, that "Papa and Mamma" would never hear of them.

"We must not neglect *Anne* for a more beautiful and bewitching woman!" she aroused herself to say, presently, in forced playfulness.

Emmett cast a lingering look at the little craft, with slender scarlet signal fluttering aloft, before he plunged *in medias res* of Chapter V.: —

"'The atmosphere in these paths was so hot, still, and aromatic, that now and then Anne loved to go there and steep herself in it. She used to tell Miss Lois that it made her feel as though she was an Egyptian princess who had been swathed in precious gums and spices for a thousand years.'"

"That is a faulty simile," interposed Clara, judicially. "How can a mummy *feel* anything? Our teacher of Rhetoric used to tell us to try every metaphor by certain rules. Mixed figures are a fatal defect in style!"

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. GILLETTE did not feel equal to the short voyage to St. Ignace, being, as she confessed, an indifferent sailor. And by two o'clock P.M., at which hour the steamer plying between island and mainland left the pier in the lower town, the wind had freshened into what young Gates, in nautically ambitious phrase, styled "a spanking breeze."

The original project of *partie carrée* would have fallen through even without Mrs. Gillette's defection. Her daughter first requested the Morgans' permission to take Miss Manly.

"Her mother is an invalid, and I have come to include the child in most of our plans," she stated.

Next, she preferred petitions from Messrs. Romeyn and Gates to be admitted to the party.

"Surely you need not ask *us!*" expostulated Clara at this. We are but addenda

— self-invited guests. Don't remind us of *that!* Pray act as if we were not here."

"Then I must look less happy," returned Karen, blithely.

Her unfailing graciousness was irresistible. except to jaundiced prejudice. Bertie Gates described her once by saying that she was "the sort of woman who thanks the man who gives up his seat to her in a street-car— don't you know?"

She was the heart of the company assembled on the forward deck as the boat swung off from the dock. But she made the others feel that they were the veins which fed the heart. The rôle of hostess was her birthright. She gave and dispensed as freely and constantly as heart-beats throw the blood into circulation, and with no more effort.

Organization in social grouping is of minor importance as compared with assimilation. Mrs. Dumaresque was mistress of the lesser and greater arts. Before the prow had ploughed a half-mile furrow, "Gem" Manly (euphemistic diminutive for Jemima) had conveyed a message, modestly and well expressed, from her mother to Mrs. Morgan, to the effect that their mothers were first-

cousins, and that she — Mrs. Manly — begged her to disregard ceremony and call upon her that evening.

"She is a prisoner to her sofa," said the girl. "I have never seen her walk across the room. She is a famous genealogist, and the discovery of a new relative is a boon to her."

Mr. Gates promptly made talk with the bride, apropos to the smallness of the world, and the laws of consanguineous attraction: Mr. Romeyn listened, gravely courteous, putting in a polished wedge of conversation when he espied an opportunity: Emmett, on the outskirts of the circle, chatted with his old comrade, each contributing his and her quota to the general talk.

Slim, blue-eyed Gem was just nineteen, and on the verge of her first season. The flutter of manner and vivacity of speech which Clara inclined, last night, to reprobate as friskiness and gush, was, in the light of their newly discovered kinship, the tremulous, eager unrest of the butterfly who was a chrysalid an hour ago, as she balances herself upon a petal-tip before launching forth into the sweet wilderness of blossom and sunlight. She was a little lady, from the crown of her coquettish

sailor-hat to the toe of her trim boot, — a fact Clara perceived with satisfaction.

Acquaintanceship ripened rapidly into friendship. The youthful matron unbent beyond her wont to meet the merry temper of her companions. Even Mr. Romeyn told an anecdote with a laugh in it, while the shuttle-cock of repartee between Gem and her palpable admirer flew fast and high. Seeing her husband glance over his shoulder in amusement not far from amaze as she recovered herself from a fit of laughter, Clara rallied her dignity.

"There is certainly intoxication in Mackinac air, as Mr. Morgan says. I am forgetting that I am the chaperone of the party."

Mrs. Dumaresque took her up on the spot.

"My dear child, I am here, and on guard! I, who was a hundred years old when you were born! I, who was never as young as Gem here!"

"It is an open secret that to Mrs. Dumaresque belongs the honor of the discovery of the fountain of perpetual youth," Mr. Romeyn said, with a bow as profound as the simultaneous plunge of the steamer would allow.

He was habitually so unsmiling, and looked so dryly impassive, that Clara already wondered at his close attendance upon the queen of the small court. Gentlemanly to punctiliousness, and unobtrusive to a degree, he yet lost not a tone or look of hers. As a wealthy bachelor of fine education and breeding, he was a decided "eligible" in the market matrimonial. It was as evident that he preferred Mrs. Dumaresque's society to any other as that she vouchsafed him no token of signal favor. She bowed slightly and smilingly, now, and without other recognition of the compliment, resumed her low-toned chat with Mr. Morgan.

"You are altogether right — as usual. It is nobody's business. Even my wife — while she is a model of discretion — "

How she happened to overhear what reached no other ears than those to which it was addressed, Clara could not tell. A new pain, like a red-hot needle, darted into her heart. She felt the blood rush tinglingly to her cheeks, then recede with impetuosity that left them cold and numb. Instinctively, she turned aside and gazed in the opposite direction from the speakers.

The scene was photographed upon her brain by the flash-light of that crucial second. They were passing the two yellow sand-bars curving about the western cove of Round Island. The waters were tumbling over them, like water-babies tossing and kicking, throwing up white arms and legs through the surf. From west to east, greater waves raced and chased and leaped upon each other, gleaming crest succeeding sun-filled hollow in frantic frolic. Wind-caps were the dancing plumes of a numberless host; there was not a cloud in the illimitable blue overhead, not a shadow upon the face of the deep.

Clara pulled herself together sooner than a weak or more sensitive woman could. Mrs. Dumaresque had a right to her secret. Emmett said truly that it was nobody else's business — and there might be circumstances that altered the case even of a man with his wife. She would never question him, would prove herself the model of discretion he vaunted her.

The steamer forged gallantly ahead in the teeth of the wind; the noise of cleaving bows and rushing air obliged Emmett to raise his voice again: —

"Yet you still wear your wedding-ring?"

"And always shall. Once married, always married. Neither crime, nor the law that condemns the criminal, can do away with the Vow of vows."

Emmett leaned over his wife's chair an hour later, with a smile half-teasing, half-anxious.

"Have the Straits done what the Atlantic and English Channel could not?" he whispered.

She shook her head mutely, her answering smile cool, but not ungentle, and, accepting the wrap he folded about her, leaned back in her chair with such marked disinclination to conversation that Mrs. Dumaresque ingeniously averted scrutiny and direct address until the voyage was ended.

The landing at St. Ignace was ugly and uninteresting. The railway station was hard by: the lines of gleaming rails leading countryward seemed to have scorched and blackened as they ran. A single long, dusty street lay along the water. The air felt arid and still after the "spanking breeze" on board the boat. The quiet town, the old clapboarded church, and the pollarded tree beside it appeared to shrivel together in the glare of the afternoon sun.

Clara's color was not yet normal when they pushed back the always-unlocked door and entered the church. The pews were straight and uncushioned; the tables to the right and left of the altar were draped with linen cloths; red Holland shades were drawn down over the windows. A really fine painting of St. Ignatius hung above the high altar. The saint knelt in prayer at a table on which were breviary, candle, and skull; the upturned visage, chastened by prayer and fasting, was pure and pale.

Conventional Clara did an unconventional thing when the low-voiced consultation as to ways and action ended in the agreement that the three men should go in search of a vehicle and guide, while the ladies waited in the church grounds.

"I should like to stay here until you come back," she said aside to Emmett. "It is cooler and not so glaringly bright as outside. Manage it so that I can sit still alone and wait."

It was Karen who did the managing, and so adroitly that there seemed to be nothing singular in Mrs. Morgan's desire to rest in the shaded interior while the other women

explored the church-yard and contiguous regions. Even Emmett saw naught amiss.

"You won't be lonely or nervous, darling?" he tarried behind the rest to say.

"I am never nervous — and seldom lonely. I shall be entirely comfortable, thank you."

Not having quite mastered the mysteries of the degrees of discretion possible to a model, Emmett followed his friends, convinced that his sensible wife had chosen, as usual, the better part. The white sunshine was intense on the water, and the wind a bit stiff even for a head as steady as hers.

Clara sat perfectly still for ten minutes, gazing at the pale, rapt face of the kneeling saint, her palms pressed hard together. The release from the observation of stranger and loving eyes was like the slow playing-out of a tense chain. She could not afford to let herself quite go, but she must have time and relief in order to think connectedly. Above all things else — the conscience which was her inflexible guide keeping the helm hard down — she would not be unjust, or even unduly sensitive. This woman, whose early influence over Emmett might have had nothing sinister in it, had a history — which was,

also, a mystery, one connected with her "unfortunate" marriage, which, he agreed with her, would better remain unknown, even to his wife. It was possible that Emmett would revoke his decision so far as to confide to the keeper of his every secret that which concerned another.

"If not,—" it was a stern whisper that ran around the bare building, where there was nothing to muffle the sibilations. "If not, I will trust him and try not to hate her—and *wait!*"

She did not add—"and watch!" But the echoes meant it.

The pallid saint, worn with waiting, and haggard with watching against the world, the flesh, and the devil; the cheap prints upon the walls; the worn boards on which worshippers sat to hear and knelt to pray; the tawdry touch imparted to the interior by the glazed red shades—she seemed to have known them a long time when she looked back in closing the door.

Mrs. Dumaresque and Gem Manly sat upon the low steps of the vestry, talking with the Canadian custodian of the priest's house. Seeing them from the windows of the adja-

cent rectory, she had come out to offer the hospitality of the premises in her master's absence. Neither Karen nor her charge remarked upon Clara's prolonged stay in the church. They smiled welcome at her approach, and introduced the *paysanne*, who dropped a courtesy and accosted her in unintelligible patois.

"*Je ne comprends pas!*" began Mrs. Morgan, stiffly.

"There is the carriage!" exclaimed Mrs. Dumaresque, joyfully, rising. "We began to fear St. Ignace was insufficient to our demands."

Emmett was in the open carriage that stopped at the gate. The other men had walked on and would meet the ladies at the tomb. The housekeeper followed them to the vehicle to offer a bouquet of sweet-williams and pansies to Mrs. Dumaresque, who thanked her in excellent French.

"The old, old story!" smiled Emmett. "Universal fascination!"

A shadow, like that cast by a swallow's wing, flitted over Karen's face. Clara noted it, and the deprecatory glance flashed at Emmett. She was becoming suspicious as well

as shrewd. Why was her husband entreated to withhold compliments when the belle accepted them from everybody else? The query lay, unanswered, at the bottom of her heart when they alighted at the grave of Father Marquette.

Mr. Romeyn and Bertie Gates were already within the small enclosure marking the spot where "in 1671, a rude and unshapely chapel, its sides of logs, and its roof of bark," was erected as "the first sylvan shrine of Catholicity" on the point which afterward received the name of St. Ignatius.

The tomb was staringly new, the location unpicturesque, but all hearkened reverently to the story of the pioneer's travels and labors and suffering, told with quiet pathos by the chosen *raconteur* of the group. Of his longing, when attacked by mortal sickness among the Illinois Indians, "to visit once more his beloved mission at Mackinac, and to bow in the chapel of St. Ignatius." How, growing worse on the canoe-voyage, he asked to be landed on an eminence, at the mouth of the river afterward named for him. Of his administration of the Sacrament to his neophytes with hands chilled by the last agony;

of his holy ejaculation — "*Sustinuit anima mea, in verbo ejus!*" and the smile with which, raising his eyes to some object he appeared to see *above the crucifix*, he expired.

"This was in 1675. In 1677, a convoy of Christian Indians, in thirty canoes, brought his bones to this place, and buried them under the high altar. When the mission was abandoned in 1706, chapel and church-house were burned. In 1877, the foundations were discovered accidentally, and further search revealed his grave. I have seen fragments of the birch-bark casket, layer after layer glued together, and blackened by fire, and, among other relics taken from the excavation, a ring, marked, 'I.H.S.'"

The driver of the hack leaned upon the fence within hearing, and Karen turned to him now.

"Have I told it right? The story is so interesting, I should be sorry to spoil it."

The man, who proved to be the proprietor of "The Golden Rule Livery Stables," had an intelligent face, and entered into respectful talk with his passengers.

Just now the small community was somewhat excited over a queer stone brought

down, within a few days, from the hills back of the town. A citizen of St. Ignace had come upon it, while clearing land overgrown with timber and brushwood. Perhaps the ladies would like to see it? They could drive by the store of the owner on their way to the boat.

The proprietor of the "curiosity," a substantial shopkeeper, brought it out to the carriage at the driver's request. It was so covered with vines and moss, when found, he stated, that most people would have passed it without noticing it. The odd shape caught his eye, and he knocked it off the boulder, of which it was the crown, with his axe.

In shape it was like a blunt beak or head; the material was brownish sandstone; the lettering, once deep and sharp, had been shallowed by frost and storm. At the driver's suggestion, the inscription was outlined with chalk, and then he placed the relic in Mrs. Dumaresque's hands.

"*A. D. MDIX. B. Capello. Genes!*" she read aloud: "1509! Seventeen years after the discovery of America! What does it mean?"

"'Bill Stumps, His Mark!'" quoted Emmett, roguishly, and, to his wife, pointlessly.

"It is a trick, of course," she pronounced, definitively. "Any other hypothesis is absurd."

"It's none of my making!" returned the owner, doggedly. "I never thought of it as anything wonderful until the priest happened to see it."

"I always prefer to believe *Things*," Karen said, thoughtfully, when cross-examination failed to shake the evidence confirmed by the hackman and others. "And this is a wonderful thing. We are greatly obliged to you for letting us see it'—giving it back to the owner. "It has given us something to think of."

She formulated her thought when they had turned a corner, and were on their way to visit an Indian burial mound newly opened.

"I believe in B. Capello, of Genoa!"

"Not really!" ejaculated Emmett, from the fastness of his Bill Stumps theory.

"I *will!* The admission widens the realm of my imagination. If the characters were Runic, the tale would be easily read. Few doubt that Norsemen visited America four

hundred years before Columbus saw San Salvador."

It was time this folly was checked by common sense as personated by Mrs. Emmett Morgan.

"'Capello' means 'head' in Italian," she said, in serious tranquillity. "It is probable that the inscription was cut by some foreigner, perhaps a hundred — perhaps fifty — years ago, in jesting reference to the shape of the natural projection of the rock."

"But the date?" urged Gem.

"Was a jest, like the rest. The whole thing was a hoax — a practical joke, that has outlived the perpetrator."

"But *B.* Capello! Oh! — I see! with a shriek of girlish laughter. "*Big* Head!"

Clara crimsoned as the others joined in. Mr. Romeyn was on the box with the driver, and Bertie Gates had found room for his slight body on the wide front seat between Gem and Mr. Morgan.

The sight of the Indian mound averted a verbal retort which might have been less temperate than good taste would warrant.

Two laborers were digging in the loose earth of the burial place. According to tra-

dition, a great battle was fought in the vicinity by Hurons and Ottawas against their common foes, the Iroquois, above two hundred and fifty years ago. Taking advantage of a sand vein which made excavation easy, a trench was opened, and the slain interred here.

The proprietor of the "Golden Rule" told the story: —

"I have, myself, seen more than thirty skulls, big and little, taken out, each with a hole behind the ear. That looks like the massacre of prisoners, men, women, and children."

All stood, gazing silently into the pit, from which every third shovelful of earth brought up a bone. The sand was oddly veined with brown-red strata.

"I say!" blurted out Bertie Gates, at length. "Do you suppose the noble *red* man's dust had anything to do with the color — you know?"

Before the irresistible ripple of laughter died away, one of the diggers picked up a skull, and offered it for the ladies' inspection.

Gem shrank back with a little cry; Clara drew herself up haughtily; Karen took the emblem of mortality in her daintily gloved

hands. It was a brown skull with two horrid rows of double teeth all around.

"That awful hole behind the ear is not here," said Mrs. Dumaresque, softly. "I hope he met his death in open battle. Men, women, and children, 'in one red burial blent!' GOD help the poor creatures He has made!"

CHAPTER V.

YES, my dear, the most picturesque creature I ever beheld! Positively, *the* most picturesque! One of the bright and beauteous beings who are sent into this prosaic world for the express purpose of making pictures and studies of themselves for the delight of other people. And so charmingly unspoiled, so unconscious of the effects she is offering for our admiration!"

Thus Clara Morgan's newly found cousin, from the lounge on which she reclined in Cleopatra-Skewton state. She was a bulky Cleopatra—a Skewton who needed neither rouge nor rose-colored curtains to heighten her complexion. Her cheeks bloomed to-day like the bowl of Mackinac poppies upon the stand at her elbow.

Mrs. Manly's parlor was a corner-room on the first floor of the hotel. Her bed-room adjoined it. By seven o'clock A.M., the promenaders began operations upon the ve-

randa outside, and kept it up until midnight. Mrs. Manly's peculiar type of nervous disorder did not interfere with her enjoyment of social bustle. She said the incessant play of heels and toes upon the resounding boards lulled her to sleep by reminding her of the rain upon the roof. In youth she had been a beauty. Her face, but for the high coloring, was handsome still. She was kind-hearted; she was rich; she was liberal; she had one single daughter, and one married in Chicago; a son in San Francisco, and an indulgent husband in Grand Rapids, making money by the hundred thousand in the furniture business, while his family were taking their costly ease at watering-places.

The doctors did not diagnose Mrs. Manly's disease with definiteness, for reasons best known to the profession. It had something to do with the spleen, a great deal to do with the spine, and was mixed up with her circulation. She spoke of it as her "Idiosyncrasy"; When she took an airing, she was wheeled in an invalid chair to her low-hung, well-padded carriage. She ate what she liked, and saw whom she pleased, and she pleased to see so many that the corner-room received the pseu-

donym of "General Intelligence Agency." When not receiving, she nibbled voraciously at a stack of novels, portly, and with plenty of color in them, like herself.

The cordial ring of her welcome to her cousin's child partially condoned to Clara for its effusiveness. Her phraseology was as florid as her complexion, and until Clara saw upon what terms of affectionate familiarity she was with "the best people" of all sections, she was inclined to chide Fate for bringing the occult relationship to light. It could not have remained unknown long after the same roof covered both. Mrs. Manly's genealogical memory was a terror to freshly finished first families; her imagination was still more vigorous. Given tibia, fibulæ, or a vertebral joint, and she could construct a skeleton-pedigree, then endue it with tendons and tissues warranted to fit. Unless imposed upon, or led off upon a wrong scent, she leaned to mercy's side in investigation and composition, being, as I have said, kind of heart and benevolent in intention. If her auditors knew those whom she held up to be diamonds to be Rhine stones, they appreciated her loyalty to her friends, and did not contradict her.

She lay among her cushions now, the soft silk draperies of gown and coverlet falling upon the floor, and expatiated upon the tableau framed in her window. It was the fifth day after the Morgans' arrival, and Clara had offered to spend the hour immediately preceding luncheon with the invalid. Her work-bag and doyleys came with her.

The framed picture was Mrs. Gillette in her easy-chair, and her daughter, who sat so close to her that the low tone in which she read aloud did not encroach upon the rights of others' speech, yet conveyed every word to her mother's ear. The sweet old face was placid and attentive; the beautiful hands were busy with ivory needles and Saxony wool. Karen's wide-brimmed hat lay by her on the piazza floor. Her skin did not burn or tan, and her eyes were like an eagle's in strength. A silvery gray morning had kept on the veil usually cast smilingly aside at the sun's approach. The day was still; a brooding calm that did not threaten; the air, which no degree of midsummer heat can make enervating, scarcely stirred the lace lappets of the mother's cap, and did not flutter the leaves as Karen turned them.

"A *genre* picture!" said Mrs. Manly in rapt appreciation. "Exquisite *and* inimitable! And to think that these valued friends of your delightful husband's should be those selected by me — and Providence, of course — as the guardians and exemplars of my darling girl, my wilding forest-maid! She fell passionately, madly in love with Mrs. Dumaresque at sight. I should have left Mackinac, which agrees with me as no other place upon the globe's circumference does, to save my child, had the object of her adoration proved unworthy, she is such a stanch friend. But Fate is ever kind to me. Except, perhaps, in the matter of my Idiosyncrasy, which I accept as an Inevitable, the shadow that throws my blessings into stronger relief."

With all her absurdities, she was a good woman whose patience approximated heroism. The perception of this mellowed what would have been genteel acrimony in Clara's tone.

"Have you known Mrs. Gillette and Mrs. Dumaresque long?"

"Never laid eyes upon them until this summer, my dear, greatly to my regret and

loss. My friend Mrs. Norris, who was here earlier in the season — such a queenly woman — introduced them to me as *her* dear and cherished friends. They travelled on the Continent together for six months two years ago, and have been intimate ever since."

"Was Captain Dumaresque with them?"

"My child, no! He had been dead for years. He lived only a few months after their marriage — sweet, suffering angel! It is well her mother is wealthy, for army pensions are disgracefully small, and she was born to 'walk in silk attire.' Nothing of the calico-and-cheese-cloth comeliness about *her!*"

"Since she is so charming and still young, she is tolerably sure to marry again. She has discarded her weeds, too. That looks as if she were not averse to proposals."

"My love! she was romantically attached to her soldier-lover! With that heart and fervid temperament, how could it be otherwise? And the army such a temptation to an imaginative girl! He was an Adonis, too, I've heard. I couldn't resist the temptation to say to Mr. Romeyn the first day that Cap-

tain and Mrs. Dale called upon me, 'What an Irresistible the uniform makes of a man!' *That* lover's impassiveness tries my soul. Rich, independent, travelled, well-born, and well-educated, he has no right to be single at thirty-eight. I wish I had known then that Mrs. Dumaresque's first was in the army. I could have barbed the lance more cunningly."

"You have heard it since, then?"

"In a singular, a most fortuitous way, my dear girl! My little Gem — always hovering around her idol, like a humming-bird around a stately rose-bush — recollected when the party broke up the night of your first appearance among us, that she had Mrs. Dumaresque's fan on her arm, and ran up to her room to restore it. The halls were noisy with people going back and forth, and her first modest tap was unheard. While she waited outside, she heard, through the transom, Mrs. Gillette, who was moving about the room, say, 'You were not quite yourself this evening, dear,' and the poor young widow answered, 'It was the sight of Captain Dale's uniform, I think, Mamma!' At that, Gem, conscience-smitten at her in-

voluntary eaves-dropping, knocked again, and this time loudly enough to arrest attention. Down she comes to me in tears of sympathy for her darling's grief, and distress lest she had been dishonorable. I understood at once that *he* had been a Captain in the army. I comprehended, too, how she had withstood Mr. Romeyn's money and devotion and family, he not having an atom of dash about him, not to mention that the blue coat, brass buttons, and shoulder-straps go a long way, even with sensible people."

Mrs. Dumaresque did not look the disconsolate widow that afternoon, as she stepped into the trim boat engaged for a row around the Island by what naughty Gem had, in her talk with Karen and Clara, dubbed, "The Ubiquities" — Messrs. Romeyn and Gates.

The latter, a rich man's only heir, was profuse in costumes. He appeared to-day in a striped blue-and-white silk shirt, girt about the waist with a scarlet scarf, white trowsers of naval cut, that sloped nattily over the instep of canvas shoes with rubber soles. His cap matched his shirt, and his fair skin, through much out-door life, was rapidly

achieving a perfect match for his scarf. His teeth were even, and startlingly white when he smiled, by contrast with his sanguine complexion. His eyes were blue, his close curls almost flaxen. His laugh was a bubbling run of mirth, and irresistibly contagious; his talk and manner proclaimed him to be an Anglomaniac of a pronounced but innocuous type. He had a cleft chin, and when he chose a peculiarly ingenuous and engaging expression, — "Raphaelesque and cherubic!" Mrs. Manly affirmed.

Mr. Romeyn, in a rough tweed suit, with no nautical pretence about it, had a saturnine cast of visage beside the red-and-white cherub. He had been Bertie Gates's guardian for the five years directly antedating his majority. It spoke well for both that they were still fast friends.

Emmett was the handsomest of the three men, in his well-appointed yachting suit of gray, the collar turned over a blue cravat. Mrs. Dumaresque sat in the bows; Mrs. Morgan in the stern; Gem, upon the bench with Bertie, pulled, with her supple wrist and embrowned hands, as good an oar as he.

"And, in my prime, I was stroke-oar of the 'Varsity crew," he said, sighingly.

"I thought the lightest weight was always coxswain," retorted Gem, quietly.

Bertie laughed, and in so doing, looked so infantile as to disarm persecution.

"I say," he drawled, her remark rolling from his harmless vanity as the water from the polished shaft of his oar, "why don't you take boxing lessons? I know a jolly Bosston gyurl who is a ca-apital boxer — don't you know? Wrists no bigger than yours, you know, — all Damascus steel, covered with satin, for looks' sake, you know. Nice shade of satin, too, be Ja-awve! Well, she met a tra-amp, one morning. Bosston gyurls given to long walks, you know — fresh-air gymnastics, and all that — don't you know? Fellow offered to see her home. Awfully lonely la-ane. She ordered the brute to get out of the road, you know, and when he swore at her, she let fly straight from the shoulder, — caught him a clip right back of his ear; and dropped him, be Ja-awve!"

"Killed him?" asked Gem, interested, but not shocked.

"No-o! but knocked him so far out of

ti-ime that she tied his ha-ands and feet with her waist-ribbon, in awfully hard knots — don't you know? and left him to recover at his leisure."

"A Grand Rapids gyurl who had taken boxing lessons would have rolled him into a ditch, and put a big stone on him — don't you know?" rejoined Gem, in audacious travesty of his manner and accent. "She wouldn't have wasted a sash-ribbon upon him. I suppose your Bosston gyurl wouldn't miss the chance of setting a touch of aesthetic 'culutah' upon the feat — you know."

"Mrs. Morgan!" said Karen, from her end of the boat. "What do you consider the most reasonable explanation of the color of Niagara and the upper lakes?"

She never checked her giddy charge openly, yet invariably interposed a tactful diversion of ideas and topics at the critical moment when girlish spirits tempted Gem to indiscretion.

"Niagara gives the key-note," she resumed, contemplatively, when Clara had offered the hypotheses laid down in school-books, and the others had discussed them. "Each lake takes up the theme, with variations of its

own. There is a series of chromatic scales between us and the shore."

The simile was apt. The sun, breaking through the silvery vapors, glanced aslant upon pebbly shoals and shingly bottom. The rising wind whipped into foamy fringe the edges of the waves running up the bank. Shaded bands of emerald were lightest above the shallows, most vivid upon the ridges that, chasing one another at the sides and behind the boat, stretched out to sea, deepening into berylline belts where cloud shadows fell. The precipitous heights were faced with pointed hemlocks, straining heavenward in serried masses, peak above peak. Upon the summits the rounded heads of the contented white cedars were interspersed and backed by the red roofs of summer cottages; from the gable of one, a flag showed pale stars and ruddy stripes, fitfully. In the face of a sheer cliff that lifted a bald forehead above blackish-green spires of hemlock and balsam, yawned a huge mouth.

"The Devil's Kitchen — don't you know?" Bertie said, agreeably, to Mrs. Morgan. "Queer thing ha-appened there, the other day. Party of three fellows of us landed

and cli-imbed up the ladder, you know. And in what you might call the pla-ate-warmer, don't you know, we found a visiting-card. Cincinnati fellow's name engraved on it, you know, and on the back in pencil: '*To His Satanic Majesty. Called to pay my respects. Sorry to find you out. See you later.*' Awfully droll! wasn't it?"

He laughed his happy laugh, and showed his dazzling teeth as artlessly as if Gem were his interlocutor.

Clara's semi-smile was icy. Had he been conscious of possible offence, he might have likened it to sherbet over-frozen. Gem laughed a ringing peal.

"Not that I think it witty in the irreverent Cincinnati man, you know, or that I am not shocked at your telling the story. But a very little upsets one's gravity when she is boating. I am as light-headed as a cork."

"Light-hearted, you mean, dear," said Karen, kindly. "After a certain age, one ceases to sneer at the blessedness of the time when a straw tickles, and a rattle pleases. It is the old story of the Sibyl leaves. The price of pure, innocent pleasure increases frightfully after one passes thirty."

"Is hearsay evidence admissible?"

Mr. Romeyn turned his head, and lifted his hat in saying it. Mrs. Dumaresque seemed unaware that a compliment was implied. She looked past them all to the watery horizon.

"I have a right to speak," she said, slowly. "I was thirty-four years old yesterday."

CHAPTER VI.

Nigh forty years have passed away,
The sailors on the Island say,
  Since the wreck of the Julia Dean.
Caught near the land some miles below,
She foundered in the fiercest blow
  The Straits have ever seen.

A howling wind, a clouded sky,
A shallow sea, waves running high,
  With Island on the lee, —
This briefly is the tale they tell;
The crew and captain labored well,
  But could not set her free,

* * * * * *

In summer days the south winds blow,
And wave and ripple come and go,
  Lapping her rugged keel;
As if in sorrow for their rage,
They seek all vainly to assuage
  The old ship for its ill.

All summer long the wild birds sing,
As 'neath the wave they dip their wing,
  And shining plumage preen.

Above the cliff the pine-trees bend,
And their sweet odors seaward send,
Over the Julia Dean.

Sweet requiem this, of Island green,
Meet requiem for the Julia Dean,
Down by the circling shore.
Winds and waves forever heard,
Murmuring trees and song of bird
Blending forevermore.[1]

Karen Dumaresque recited the simple lines in tones that took their murmurous pathos from the wind in the balsam forest crowding down the steep to the loose sand and drift in which the skeleton of the wreck was embedded. Her ribs, gaunt and gray, lay half in, half out, of the water. Great bolts of iron rusted in her joints; tongues of foam lazily licked the bones of the dead vessel. As the boat approached, two crows flew from a projecting timber, cawing hoarsely. The ceaseless surge of the breeze in the evergreens had responded for fifty years to the purr and lap of the billow.

Beaching the boat a rod or so away, the party had landed for closer inspection.

"I came alone at my first visit," Karen

[1] By Major D. W. Whittle, 1887.

said, strolling up to the water's edge; "Leaving my mother in the carriage when the road gave out, I followed the crookedest, steepest little trail you ever saw, down the bank. The crows were here then, too. They must have a nest near by. The day was fresh and sweet, the water heaving ever so little. That morning Mrs. Hanlon had told me the story of the wreck, and given me a copy of the verses."

It transpired so naturally here, as in other circumstances which had come up within the past few days, that the brilliant widow chanced (so Clara stated it to herself) to be better versed in local history than the others, that even her critic could not accuse her of forecasting the scene. Not one of the rest had ever heard of the *Julia Dean* until they rounded the point and saw the stranded timbers. Inquiries, more or less pressing, drew forth the story and the recitation of the poem.

Gem and Bertie picked their way from beam to cross-piece as far as they could go; Emmett was by his wife on the beach; Mr. Romeyn threw a boat-cloak over a heap of *débris* to make a seat for Mrs. Dumaresque. Unwillingly, Clara recalled Mrs. Manly's

eulogium: "The most picturesque creature I ever beheld!" If she could persuade herself that this picture-making was stagey attitudinizing, she could despise, and therefore cease to dread her. Emmett took his wife's hand, and would have laid it gently within his arm in sympathy with the emotions which he believed were stirred by the scene and story. She drew away, more crossly than coyly. Several times, of late, he had been conscious, spiritually, of such vague discomfort as the man feels who, walking through forest paths, brushes blindly at invisible gossamer tangles upon his eye-lashes. This was an overt rebuff, and the pair of rattles, poising themselves upon the sodden timbers, saw it. They looked away, good naturedly, without change of countenance, but the coincidence nettled him. Obeying an indignant impulse, he walked deliberately across to Mrs. Dumaresque, leaving Clara alone. Without a moment's hesitation, the deserted wife stepped lightly over sand, drift, and wreck, and, joining the young couple, fell into their talk of marine disasters.

"Miss Woolson says in *Anne*, that 'the long shore-lines which look harmless enough,

yet hold in their sands the bones of many a drowned man, the ribs of many a vessel,'" mused Gem, peering sharply into the submerged sands. "Here are the wooden ribs. The drowned crew and passengers cannot be far off."

"This young lady's taste has taken an osseous turn since the skull-and-cross-bone episode of our St. Ignace trip," drawled Bertie, feeling meditatively for the moustache that never came. "She is ambitious to atone for her spasm of fright when the clayey old party in the hole did the 'Go-up-ba-ald-head' at her, don't you know? I offered to poke in the sand with an oar upon the chance of turning up a loose tooth, you know, or a spa-are-rib, but she won't let me."

"I am afraid we are all in danger of becoming irreverently familiar with such subjects," said Clara. The ring of her thinned voice reached the trio on the shore. "For my part, I am so constituted — unfortunately, perhaps — I have been so educated, maybe unwisely, that I recoil from all jests that have death and dissolution as their point. I am aware," the fixed half-smile passing into a faint laugh, "that I may seem weak and

womanish to people of strong minds and more advanced ideas. I am injudicious in expressing such obsolete views."

Gem blushed so painfully as to start the tears.

"Oh, Cousin Clara! you don't suppose we meant anything like *that* by our nonsense!"

"You didn't say a word of it!" Bertie flung himself into the breach. "It was all my chaff, you know, Mrs. Morgan, and uncommonly bad form, as you say — don't you know? As Miss Manly says, there is something in boating that goes to the head — don't you know? and this beastly air — beg pardon! air's all right, you know, but in combination with my bra-ains, don't you know! there's a sort of brandy-and-soda effect, be Ja-awve! that plays the deuce — beg pardon, again, I am sure! — "

By this time, everybody except Clara was in a roar, and Bertie's end was gained. His sunburnt face was so swathed in regretful confusion that Mrs. Dumaresque's summons seemed opportune.

"My dear boy! the longer you talk, the worse you make it. Perhaps rowing will draw the blood from your head."

Still laughing, she led the way to the boat.

"If that head were only as sound and steady as your heart! *That* would be a combination to be proud of!"

Emmett had his silent thought, as he took up his oar.

"I wish Clara's ideas of right and fitness were less rigid. Karen would have regulated their reckless talk without wounding anybody."

It is both the bane and blessing of love that it makes him who feels it thermometric. Without meeting her husband's eye, Clara knew that a blur had stolen over the perfectness of their affection and trust. Taking the terrible truth to her heart, as even unimaginative women will, instead of fighting away from it, she ascribed to it the wrong cause. Hitherto, she had consistently disapproved of Emmett's renewed intimacy with his former crony. Tried by the standard held grimly aloft by the *ton* of Lisbon, New Jersey, the most popular woman in the Grand Hotel of Mackinac was theatrical, scheming, showy, and only saved by the accident of wealth and breeding from Bohemianism. She "took up" with people nobody else knew, and

brought them out. She courted popularity with the lowly as sedulously as with the lofty; she scouted precedent, made rules for herself, and cajoled her *clientèle* into following them. Her frank grace of manner, her ready sympathy, her talents, and her tact were a fearful array of odds to her who now acknowledged her as a rival in her husband's regard.

She put the fact baldly to herself — knew that she was justly, if bitterly jealous; arraigned judgment and pride to answer for her tardy awakening to the fact. As in a miserable dream, she sat erect, and apparently composed, looking, listening, and speaking mechanically during the rest of the sail she would have found enchanting three days before.

They swept past the Manitou Rock on which, says the legend, the Great Spirit alighted upon his visits to the Island; lay on their oars, and gazed in awed silence upon the aërial span of stone through which, at this hour, flowed a strong stream of sunshine, the gate "arched by the hand of GOD" in the solid cliff; jested at the extravaganza rehearsed by Bertie and Gem in the shadow

of "Robinson's Folly": the sky blue above them between the curdled clouds, the glittering, restless waters whispering and babbling beneath the bows, and folding into sighing calm in their wake. It was all a delightless farce to the miserable creature who forced herself to exclaim and smile and be social with the merry crew.

When the most picturesque fort in North America came in sight, binding the dark brows of the heights like a snowy fillet, Emmett, than whom no other member of the party was more deceived by her masterly deception, leaned forward to address his bride.

"Clara, dear! this is the finest view we have of Fort Mackinac. The three block houses were built as early as 1780. The fort was finished in 1783, twenty years after the massacre at Fort Michilimackinack on the mainland, near where Mackinaw City now stands.

Clara raised her cool green eyes to the irregular line of wall overtopped by peaceful "quarters."

"Yes?" she said, with the inanely interrogative cadence which wet-blankets the most ardent enthusiasm.

Emmett pursued his uphill course, nevertheless.

"It was built by the British, and ceded to the Americans after the Revolution, I think. In 1812, the British commander at St. Joseph, getting news of the declaration of war before the American garrison heard of it, crossed over to the Island with one company of white soldiers and one thousand Indians. They disembarked at British Landing, which we passed awhile ago, threw up earthworks at what is now known as Fort Holmes, and at daybreak summoned the garrison to assemble with the few inhabitants of the town in the Old Distillery, the ruins of which I pointed out to you yesterday, and surrender to the Crown. If they refused, town and fort would be given up to his Indians. The commandant could do but one thing.

Clara's face was blandly impassive; her eyes were as clear and expressionless as two flat rounds of malachite. When the poor fellow brought the halting recital to a period, she said once more: —

"Yes?"

Good women can be more cruel to those they love than good men.

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Good women can be more cruel to those they love than good men.

There is a feline refinement of torture in their manipulation of the offender when wrong has been done to pride. Sometimes the victim is played with to his wounding, and left alive. The scratches are only scratches, but they are deep. The chances are that the hurt one will never complain of them, yet the cicatrice remains a ridge to his death-day. Emmett was straightforward in thought and action, and generous of temper. If he smote with his right hand, he would raise with his left as soon as his antagonist was down. He knew that he was being dealt with now, as never before, for some offence, time and date unknown, and was too much confounded to be resentful. He had not meant to be a didactic prig, but felt in the chilling impartiality of that wide, level gaze, like one, and a fool besides.

"Those old block houses are a sort of three-cornered frown," observed Mrs. Dumaresque, gazing up at them. "It would be an amiable fortification but for them. That one to the left is now a paint-shop. A fireplace cuts off one corner, and helps you to picture the room as it was in those early days, — the guard grouped about the hearth on cold

nights, or women and children warming themselves after the midnight run through the snow at the alarm given by the sentinels of the approach of Indians."

"There is no more dramatic incident in the history of Mackinac than the erection of Fort George, — now Fort Holmes, — on the occasion of which you speak, Mr. Morgan," said Mr. Romeyn's well-bred accents.

Emmett gave a laugh of relief.

"Story-telling is not my forte. If I am forgiven this once, I will leave the business, hereafter, to abler hands."

His bow and smile to Karen were a graceful retreat from a position the one dearest to him had made disagreeable. To Clara, it seemed an insult. Pride and precedent had bound fast her mask. She advanced one velveted claw.

"You must not be discouraged! You will improve with practice — and study of the best models!"

And she, too, inclined her head toward the handsome woman in the bows of the boat.

CHAPTER VII.

BERTIE GATES walked up to the hotel with Mrs. Dumaresque and Gem Manly, Mr. Romeyn making circumspect and conscientious talk with Mr. and Mrs. Morgan, some yards in advance of them.

The click of Clara's boot-heels upon the plank sidewalk, as regular as clock-beats, and her trim figure and stately carriage were the primal suggestions of what Bertie always mentioned in subsequent seasons as the "jolliest lark ever fledged, don't you know?"

"Mrs. Morgan tells me she is extravagantly fond of walking," he said, eying her approvingly. "If I could do any one thing as well as she steps out, I'd do nothing else for the rest of my life, you know, except eating and drinking, of course, you know."

"Not even boating?" asked Gem.

"That exception goes without saying — don't you know? I suspect that Mrs. Mor-

gan is not addicted in the least to aquatic sports. She was regularly done up by the St. Ignace expedition, and as uncomfortable to-day as a nineteenth-century Christian with a tolerably well-balanced head could be."

Mrs. Dumaresque's thoughtful countenance cleared suddenly.

"Do you really think that was the matter?"

"I know it! She's game — don't you know? with the will power of a four-hundred-horse-power propeller. But I have had personal intimacy with the symptoms of *mal de mer*. Until I was eighteen, it made me giddy to sail upon a chip in a mud-puddle — don't you know? Only stern resolution overca-ame the infirmity. Ask Romeyn how I conducted my limp individua-ality the first time we went abroa-ad."

"Put it out of your mind!" advised Gem. "The remotest suggestion of the other side — even a seasick imagination — makes you quite altogether too-too English — don't you know?"

"Poor girl!" said Mrs. Dumaresque, regretfully. "How selfishly thoughtless in me not to make inquiry before we arranged

and establish herself in a rocker by the window, book in hand, and to sit thus, expectant of, and prepared for a scene matrimonial, for half an hour, without sight or sound of her spouse.

At a short view, Emmett's delay was fortunate for the wife who considered herself aggrieved. It granted her season for reflection; for the arrangement of evidence and reckoning of available proofs. As a result of twenty minutes of the hardest thinking she had ever done — and she was never thoughtless — she got up, unbound her wealth of dusky red hair, letting it fall down her back; closed the inner shutters, propped her feet upon a stool, and tilted her rocking-chair at an angle that indicated need of and disposition to rest. To a man, the change of attitude would have meant nothing beyond this. In reality, as the feminine reader will comprehend, it betokened a radical change of tactics. When she took her seat in becoming demi-toilette, her hair in good conversation order, the open page symptomatic of collected thought, and a heart at leisure from itself to investigate and decide, Mrs. Emmett Morgan had designed arraignment,

judgment, and sentence of her erring lord. She would warn him, in temperate terms, and not too many of them, that he was in danger of beguilement at the eyes and lips of a plausible syren; adduce her proofs, and stipulate, before condescending to condone past transgressions, that they cut short a sojourn thickening with omens of ruin to their wedded bliss. In fine, she meant to save her husband at all hazards, but by rational methods. Emmett, according to her reckoning, would ask a solution of the lofty *nonchalance* she saw had confused and disturbed him. The rest would follow in good shape, order, and time.

Not until she began to test the strength of the shreds of proof she held did she perceive the folly of overt action. Again she said to her sensible self that she must "wait." The seducer, if left alone, would wax worse and worse, and conviction be rendered easier and certain.

"It passes my comprehension" — she said it almost audibly, so futile was the attempt to follow the wicked windings of Circe's ways — "it passes my comprehension what she wants with them *all!*"

"Them" signified her Emmett, Mr. Romeyn, cherubic Bertie, hotel clerks, and waiters, and every other man to whom Mrs. Dumaresque had spoken or had smiled upon in strict Clara's sight.

"I read her correctly that first evening! She is an *intriguante*, and does her evil work *con amore*. Every good, upright woman should assist in thwarting her designs."

In the cunning begotten of her righteous detestation of intrigues and manœuvres of whatever description, she laid her guileless plan to disarm inquiry and avert criticism from the man she would rescue.

Honest Emmett walked right into the trap.

Heart and conscience stricken at finding her suffering again with what he anathematized as "a beastly water-headache," he repented utterly and remorsefully of his misconstruction of her changed behavior on the voyage and homeward walk.

"What a brute a man makes of himself sometimes!" he confessed to Mrs. Gillette, to whom he stole away for remedies when Clara, at his prayer, had lain down on the bed and promised to try to sleep. "Do you know, I really fancied that the darling girl

was displeased with me (though Heaven knows why she should be!) her manner was so constrained and she grew so silent. And — would you believe it? — I actually let her go upstairs to her room, thinking that she would get over her irritation sooner if left to herself."

Armed with phospho-caffeine, mentholin, and antipyrin, he rushed back to his patient, and would have tried all three at once, had not she assured him that his care and petting had made her better already.

"All I need now is rest, and to have you near me," she added. "If you have nothing better to do, would you mind going on with *Anne?* I cannot talk just now, but I shall forget pain while you read."

Look and accents were gentle and pleading. She was so lovely in her lassitude that his soft heart was full as he drew up his chair to her side, and, holding her hand, began Chapter VII.

The air flowed in life-giving breaths between the shutters he left ajar; the bars of light on the carpet were changing from silver to gold; a tall spray of lilies in a vase upon the balcony exhaled perfumed sighs. For

awhile Clara could only be grateful that the heat and ache were gradually leaving her heart, congratulate herself upon the success of her ruse, and renew the resolve to take no more risks in a matter so vital as her lien upon the first place in her husband's thoughts. Then, she became interested in the finest episode in the story — the *Huron's* narrow escape from shipwreck.

"Open the blinds, and let us see where she landed," said Clara, in her natural voice, as the stirring recital closed with the picture of the two old men "running along like schoolboys, hand-in-hand," to meet Rast.

In her interest, she got up and went to the window, leaning upon Emmett's shoulder, his arm about her, while he verified the location of the small island opposite, the wharf, and the western pass through which "at four o'clock, the *Huron* came into sight, laboring heavily, fighting her way along inch by inch, but advancing."

"How much more interesting it makes it all!" said the wife. "You know that the Old Agency House was burned down some years ago?"

Emmett drew her, unresisting, to his knee.

"Yes; and Père Michaux was drawn from life. His real name was André Désiré Joseph Pirèt. He belonged to a noble Belgian family, was a distinguished graduate of the University of Paris, and afterward a professor there. He was both physician and priest, a man of splendid physique, courtly and scholarly. One wonders to find him stationed over the obscure parishes of St. Ignace and Mackinac."

Her head was upon his shoulder; while he talked he stroked her beautiful hair. Instead of saying "Yes?" now, she led him on.

"Is he living?"

"No. He died in 1876, at seventy. His parishioners remember him affectionately. Antoine, the little cook, was a real personage. And the dog-team!"

Both laughed. The reconciliation was complete. Before the process of quarelling and making-up becomes stale through over-repetition, the effect is similar to that produced by a dose of chlorate of potassium — swallowing it is not agreeable, but it leaves a sweet taste in the mouth.

They did not go down to dinner, but had a dainty little repast served in their room.

The table was set near the balconied window: Clara, in a wondrous India-silk tea-gown of the dimmest and least definite blue, with a Montmorenci fall of cream-tinted lace down the front, presided; the band upon the gallery over the main entrance was playing popular airs; the tumult of feet and voices below, modified by music and distance, was not discordant. When the tray was removed, Emmett, upon his wife's insistence, sat down on the window-sill with his cigar, taking care to blow all the smoke outside, and his back against the window-casing, surveyed the satisfactory interior of the chamber — his bride being the centre-piece.

"Talk of courting-days!" he moralized. "One month of marriage is worth ten years of wooing. *This* is what I call living!"

An indiscreet bride would have improved the opening by contrasting the solid comfort of the *tête-a-tête* with the ephemeral delight of association with other and speciously fascinating women. Our Clara merited her spouse's encomium, and did not mar his "model."

They were still sitting thus at ten o'clock, when Mrs. Dumaresque tapped at the door

to inquire after Mrs. Morgan's headache. Clara greeted her affably — to do otherwise would have been indiscretion — and pressed her to take a seat.

"Thank you, but I can only stay a minute. Now that you are quite comfortable again, may I ask for your answer to my impatient young people? Have they your permission to go on with their arrangements for Monday?"

Clara looked bewildered, and Emmett colored foolishly.

"I am sorry — but she had such a headache — and when she was better — I may as well out with the truth, Karen! I have been too happy to think of anything else!"

"Bravo!" Karen's eyes sparkled with humor and feeling. "That is the old, genuine Emmett, through and through! The project has assumed more definite proportions since we spoke to you of it this afternoon. Mr. Romeyn and Mr. Gates — Gem's 'Ubiquities,' Mrs. Morgan — invite you two to a tour on the Island on next Monday — weather and health permitting. They have heard of your fondness for walking, and propose to explore Mackinac on foot. Lunch will be

served at some central point, and carriages will meet us there, should we get tired. Not to be outdone by you in frankness, Emmett, I will say that Mrs. Morgan's graceful walk and fine physique suggested the expedition to our appreciative Bertie. And, as we all long for an opportunity to do her especial honor, the germ flowered quickly."

"She consented very prettily," reported Karen to her mother. "She really seemed gratified, and Emmett — dear old fellow! — was enchanted. His wife — unintentionally, I know — infused a *soupçon* of patronage into her acceptance, but that is a trace of provincial rust that will rub off in time. The provinces are nothing if not patronizing. And she has so many admirable traits, that I am glad Emmett has her. I am — as Bertie would say — *awfully* fond of Emmett Morgan!"

She spoke abstractedly, gazing from the window upon islands that slept and waters that dreamed in the moonlight, and remained standing thus so long that her mother spoke to recall her thoughts:

"It is growing cooler every hour. Don't stay too long in that draught, dear!"

"Draughts have no effect on my tough system," — leaving her outlook, nevertheless.

Seating herself upon a cushion, she laid her head on her mother's knee.

"I'm a-weary, mither! Sometimes I could imagine, now-a-days, that there is something thunderous in the air. Not that I believe in presentiments. I fancy the sight of the picture of domestic concord I happened upon in the Morgans' room just now touched the sore spot. It is not only

'When sparrows build, and leaves break forth,'

that

'My old sorrow wakes and cries.'

Whatever comes — whatever was — whatever may never be again — I have *you!* That anchor holds!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE next day was the Sabbath.

The hotel-hive awoke to humming life later than upon other days, but it was quite as lively after movement began. The air was cool, yet balmy: the sunshine rested, a visible and ineffable benediction, upon land and lake. While a vast majority of transient sojourners upon the Island elected to look through Nature up to Nature's GOD, or to go through the initial stages of that hypothetical ceremony, enough were of a different mind to fill the little Episcopal church in the lower town. The officers from the Fort and their families were there, the martial figure and handsome face of Captain Dale conspicuous among them. The village choir, trained by Mrs. Dale, and owing much to the fine voices of two or three private soldiers, rendered the psalms and anthems creditably, but not so well as the impromptu quartette seated directly behind the Morgans.

Gem Manly sang a more than passable contralto; Mr. Romeyn's bass, although not heavy, was correct; Bertie Gates was a tenor, his tuneful pipe like a lark's in clearness and melody. But the sweetest sound in church and upon Island that perfect Sabbath-day was Karen Dumaresque's voice upraised in the choral service.

It is a curious fact that those whom we, reluctantly, and for lack of a better word, designate as "elocutionists" do not as a class, sing well, and that many have no ear or liking for music. Karen sang as she recited — with exquisite taste, and purity of tone, and, when the theme required, sometimes rising into passion that bore the listener's soul with her. People stopped singing to hearken; a few were rude enough to turn their heads to spy out the owner of the splendid organ. Captain and Mrs. Dale thanked her in Clara's hearing, after service, for the assistance given by her "amateurs" to the regular choristers.

The whole exhibition, including the public acknowledgment of a display of private talent, was to Mrs. Morgan's just sense of what became the time and place, in wretched

taste. *She* had a strong, well-cultivated voice, and, if put upon her muscle, could, she was positive, drown Mrs. Dumaresque's clean out of hearing. She had not uttered a note. This was a house of worship, not a concert-hall. With head up, and upper lip contracted, she made her way imperiously through the vestibule, and did not slacken her pace until Bertie Gates, puffing and glowing, overtook them. The cherubic knew what was due to the day, and was irreproachable in broadcloth and high silk hat. There were gloves — a faultless fit — upon his hands, and a natty cane in that he carried to his hat-brim.

Mrs. Gillette wished to know if Mr. and Mrs. Morgan would take seats in her carriage, Mrs. Dumaresque preferring to walk.

Mrs. Morgan declined, with courteous decision. She, too, preferred walking: indeed, she was about to propose a somewhat long *détour* in their return to the hotel. Wheeling herself and escort about, she took the lower road leading along the water's edge. They met Mrs. Dumaresque walking with Mrs. Hanlon, a Chicago woman who had a cottage upon Mackinac Island; Gem, talk-

ing with both ends of her tongue to Mr. Romeyn — and so many other acquaintances that Clara gave a sigh of relief when they reached the quieter neighborhood of the old Presbyterian church. It stands, empty and forlorn, by the wayside, a gaunt, gray memorial of times when "tall, spare men came westward to teach the Indians, and earnest women, with bright, steadfast eyes and lathe-like forms, were their aiders, wives, and companions."

"You recollect that Miss Lois 'used to open and air it at stated times, and occasionally to sing, in her thin, husky voice, a verse of a hymn'?" said Emmett, unconscious of a falling barometer. "That is the Church-house on the hill. It is now enlarged into a hotel. You see it is quite possible for the steeple to 'throw a slow-moving shadow across the garden, like a great sun-dial.' There are the ruins of the Old Agency House below the Fort Garden. Did you know that they call that steep cliff the Tarpeian Rock?"

"My *dear* husband!" Her way of saying it and her smile belonged to the glacial period, and would have enhanced the honors

of a matron of forty years' endurance,—"suppose we take a vacation, upon this day of physical and mental rest, from study of the natural beauties and literature of Mackinac! We will enjoy them all the more to-morrow."

What remained of Emmett after the "crusher" expostulated apologetically.

"I thought you were so much pleased with *Anne* that these things would interest you."

"I *am* interested in *Anne* and in the scenes described in it—*on week-days!* I do not consider it a Sunday book!"

I wonder how angels, versed by thousands of years' study in human inconsistency, regard the cant of prevarication which saints use as a cloak for envy, malice, wrath, and all uncharitableness! The meanest "dodge" at the command of sinful man is the religious. Whether or not the professing Christian who, in a moment of exasperation, calls his Maker to witness to the truth of an intemperate assertion, is less guilty than the sinner to whose mouth profanity is so common that he unconsciously takes in vain the NAME which is above every other, is an awful question with which I may not intermeddle.

Emmett did not retort. Nor did he own to himself that his re-enthroned idol had settled by so much as the fraction of an inch toward the plane of the every-day wife, for whom hourly allowance must be made if one would maintain a decent show of conjugal amity. But the fact remained that she had.

The northwestern wind was strong enough by evening to sweep the piazza clean of the hardiest promenaders. The rotunda was full; the fire in the recessed sitting-room opening out of it was hedged about with people standing and sitting; the drawing-room and the snug apartments devoted to desks and letter-writers were crowded.

Mrs. Manly was made supremely complacent by the presence in her parlor of what she described as "the choicest *click* of the choice company convened under the expansive roof." Reclining in high state upon the sofa wheeled diagonally across the end of the hearth-rug, she took in at one gratified glance Mrs. Gillette and her daughter, the Morgans, Captain and Mrs. Dale, "the Ubiquities," Judge and Mrs. Morris, from Grand Rapids, and Mr. and Mrs. Leighton, of Chicago, whose summer home, "Cliff Cottage," was

within a stone's throw of the hotel. Gem, modestly mute in the presence of so many older than she, cuddled upon a corner ottoman, her head against the arm of Mrs. Dumaresque's chair. The girl basked and throve and sweetened in Karen's presence as heliotrope in the sunshine.

The wind smote that corner of the house with a roar of savage mirth: the sea-coal fire puffed contentedly and grew redder with each sigh. The gas-glare was subdued by pink silk shades. The bowl upon the tripod at Mrs. Manly's elbow was filled with roses, damascene in odor, tender in color.

"The parent-roots were brought by the Jesuit fathers from France over two hundred years ago," said the hostess, toying with them with fat hands as pink as the petals and laden with rings. "Mrs. Hanlon brought them to me this afternoon from Mrs. Wendel's garden. By the way, Mrs. Dumaresque, she raved over the stroll she had with you to-day. Like the rest of the world, she finds you enchanting."

"Chestnuts!" drawled Bertie in a pretended aside, leaning behind Karen's chair towards Gem's ear.

The hostess took the saucy comment good humoredly.

"I suppose you do get weary of so much repetition of *that!* Doesn't it elate you a bit — as it would us commoner clay? Or have you the faculty of hiding it so well that we never suspect the flutter?"

Clara may have heard in her school-days of the man who voted to banish Aristides because he was tired of hearing him called "The Just." She did not recall it in this connection, but she would have sympathized with the bored citizen. She was the only person present who did not admire the graceful simplicity with which the heavy adulation was put by.

"What is the old saying about beauty being in the optics seeing, rather than in the object seen?" smiled Karen. "Mrs. Hanlon's enjoyment of my society was reflex action. She is a mine of romantic Island-lore. We walked and talked together for an hour or more, and I felt at parting that I had tapped but one vein — "

"She charged me to ask you for the story of the 'Indian Maiden and her Soldier-Lover,'" broke in Mrs. Manly, effusively.

"Could we have a fairer opportunity for it than here and now?"

At the tumult of entreaty that arose, Karen lifted her brows significantly. She knew instantly that she was the victim of another of the friendly plots her idle admirers, on the *qui vive* for sensational novelty, were daily springing under her feet. She almost heard the tone and terms of Mrs. Manly's invitation to "drop in quietly, this evening, and I will coax that always amiable Mrs. Dumaresque to *do* something — tell a story, or recite, or sing, or maybe, all three." The proposal had come about a little too smoothly. Perhaps she did weary once in a good many whiles, of living continually in the electric blaze that cuts sharp, unsparing silhouettes of the social celebrity whose talent is the ability to entertain her fellows. With all her love of action and variety, the companionship of her kind, and her generous desire to please, it would have been strange had she not felt disposed, sometimes, to resist the disposition of those about her to ring up the curtain in and out of season.

There was no trace of ungracious reluctance in her acceptance of the spray of sweet-

brier, produced by Mrs. Manly as a substitute for the myrtle, to which poets improvised and bards sang in classic days. Judge Morris presented it with stately grace, receiving a smile no younger man could have won.

"The ancient custom was to pass it on — remember!" she said, warningly.

"Doesn't it remind you of Greek plays, and Sappho, and Corinne?" whispered Mrs. Manly, behind her fan, to Mrs. Morgan.

"It is, as you say, intensely scenic!" responded Clara in a higher key.

But two or three of those nearest to her heard the ill-advised Skewton-Cleopatra eulogium and the reply. All eyes were upon her who, with the poet's spray in her fingers, began the tale as quietly as if Gem, or any other loving girl, were her solitary auditor.

"You may have noticed a small and very old house on the left-hand side of the way, as we went to church to-day; just before we reached the weather-beaten, barn-like building which was begun for a hotel and never finished. The cottage was built seventy years or more ago by a white trader who married a beautiful squaw. She was fairer in complexion than most Indians, and made him

a good wife. He was wealthy — for those days — by the time their eldest daughter, Sophie, was fourteen. She inherited her mother's beauty, and her father's intelligence, and there was no difference of opinion between the parents when the well-to-do trader determined to send her away from home to be made a lady of. He was a shrewd, proud man, who loved his wife well enough, but saw the hopelessness of trying to elevate her above their present station. The squaw would never be anything but a squaw. She had not even learned to speak English in all these years, and never adopted the dress of civilized people. At home she wore moccasins, jacket, short skirt, and leggings. When she went abroad she wrapped her blanket over her head, as the women of her race had done for hundreds of years. Perhaps her husband did not care to oppose her whim in this respect. It may have been the one instance in which he could not move her: for she seems to have been a mild, docile creature, who let him rule his household as he willed.

"So Sophie went to school in Detroit, and stayed there until she was nineteen — for the last year as a parlor boarder. Her father

had relatives there — people of wealth and good social position. Mackinac was a long way off then, and he had, probably, other reasons for arranging that the girl should not come home in her vacations. At the house of one of his kinspeople she met a young lieutenant in the regular army, who fell in love with her. He was from the South, handsome, chivalric, and devoted to her. If she had not loved him in return, there would be no story to tell of them to-night. She confessed her attachment, but refused to give him a definite reply 'until she went home.' She came back to the Island and the little story-and-a-half house, at the end of the term. He was to follow her in a week or two. From the window of her bed-room on the appointed day she watched the approach of the boat which brought him; saw him leap to the pier, and take the road to her home.

"When he knocked at the front door she sent her mother down to open it.

"I know just how the Indian wife looked, — so graphic was Mrs. Hanlon's sketch of her. Jacket, leggings, and short skirt were of fine black cloth. She was fastidious as to material. Her black hair, tied with ribbons in two

braids, hung down her back. Her eyes were dull, her manner quiet to doggedness. When the visitor, mistaking her for a servant, asked if Miss B—— were at home, she grumbled, in Indian fashion, and pointed to the parlor door.

"At this instant Sophie ran down stairs. I can imagine her, too, as giving her lover one hand, she held out the other to the patient, dumb woman beside her, and introduced —

"'My mother!'"

"'The heroine! the dear, noble, grand creature!'" Mrs. Manly's ejaculation was a sob. "But did she know what she risked?"

"She knew so well that when her lover, rallying from the shock of the meeting, implored her to become his betrothed, she let him plead for a long time before she consented. He left the Island, at the end of a week, to rejoin his regiment, with the promise to return to claim his bride the next spring. For several months they corresponded regularly, as affianced lovers.

"Then — "

She paused: the hand holding the sweetbrier spray sank to her knee; her eyes followed it; her head and voice were lowered:

her utterance was slow, as with repressed pain: —

"The story is so common that the sequel ought to surprise nobody, only love with her was so strong, and his spoken passion had been vehement. His Southern kinspeople persuaded and ridiculed and stormed him out of 'the fancy' — so it was said. And there was the Indian mother, you know. He gave up his betrothed, and sent back her letters, and wrote to her that she must forgive and forget him, as one too weak and unworthy to merit her regard."

"The beastly ca-ad!" from Bertie.

"The villain!" in Mr. Leighton's voice, round and deep with honest indignation.

Mrs. Manly tugged so violently and vainly for her pocket handkerchief that Gem silently proffered hers, and hid her brimming eyes with her arched hand.

"He was neither," said Mrs. Dumaresque, quietly. "Dispassionately considered, he was the victim of circumstances. She never let him be blamed in her hearing. If she uttered a moan, it was upon her knees and alone. But from the day the news came, the maid forgot her ornaments; the girl ceased to

live for herself. She laid away all the pretty clothes and trinkets bought with her indulgent father's money in Detroit, and never again wore anything finer than a cotton print or a plain white gown.

"Mrs. Hanlon gave one scene so vividly that I seem to have seen it myself. You may not know that she lived in Mackinac until her marriage? One winter evening, she and Sophie's little sister were seated upon low crickets behind the stove in the sitting-room of the cottage, dressing dolls in Indian costume. Sophie in her print gown, ruffles of the same material at throat and wrists, was reading aloud from *The Saturday Evening Post* to her old father, who was now both blind and deaf. On a big sideboard, brass-plated, at the side of the room, was a tray containing a pitcher and tankards of solid silver, shining bright, as were the brasses. The Indian mother entering, dressed as I have described, said some gutturals in her husband's ear. Sophie lowering her paper and looking up while he answered in the same tongue. Then the squaw poured something — wine or cider — from the pitcher into a tankard, and served her lord.

"Sophie's lungs were weak, and reading aloud to a deaf man tired her throat — and then, too, some important hidden spring was broken. Mrs. Hanlon was still a child when the patient daughter, one day, quilted the needle carefully into the calico frock she was making for a poor half-breed child, and laid herself, dressed as she was, upon the white bed in that small chamber from the window of which she had seen her lover leap to the wharf, and died as she had lived, without a murmur."

The rustle marking the letting out of held breaths was checked as she resumed: —

"Mrs. Hanlon was a married woman, and on a visit to her old home, when, one summer morning, as she stood upon the porch, a middle-aged officer turned the corner from the Fort, and stopped at the gate.

"'Can you tell me, Madame, where I may find the grave of Miss Sophia B——?' he asked.

"She directed him to the Catholic cemetery, and where, about the middle of it, he would see the headstone marked with the girl's name. She recognized him at once, although his moustache was gray, and he

wore a colonel's uniform. Two hours later he passed again. She was behind the blinds now, and did not let him see her. His head was bent; he walked slowly, his hands locked together behind him; his eyes were red and swollen with weeping."

"Is there no more of it?" asked Gem, chagrined, as the narrator ceased to speak. Karen patted the bonny head, smiling sadly.

"What more could there be, dear heart? Death ends all. Captain Dale may have met the unhappy hero of my true story in peace or in battle, — for he cast in his lot with that of his native South. He was General —— of the Confederate service."

Captain Dale started to his feet.

"I saw him, again and again! I was within ten feet of him when he surrendered his command to Grant," he said with profound emotion; "he was a true man and a brave soldier. Heaven rest his soul!"

Before dropping the curtain upon this chapter, I would win the reader to look once more at the principal figure of the group clustered about the hospitable hearth on that windy Sunday night.

For I think, to those of us who loved her

best, she never seemed exactly again as while she told the little tale, so common, as she had said, yet so piteously pathetic. The flushed air was full of rose-breath; the sweet-brier between her fingers drooped into spicy languor with the warmth of the room. The varied, yet all-natural modulations of her voice; the womanly sympathy of the sweet, deep eyes; the modest queenliness with which she sustained the honors we never wearied of heaping upon her — ah! Memory and I will have parted company for aye when my heart ceases to soften and glow in the recollection of all this, and at the name and thought of her who was, even then, walking straight toward the quicksands!

CHAPTER IX.

"And this is a battle-ground!" Gem said it dissatisfiedly. "I never saw one before."

"Happy child!" smiled Karen. "They are very much like other fields, when the conventional plough has been over them a few times, usually less picturesque."

"Most common-place looking locations in the world, don't you know?" Bertie, leaning against the loosely laid stone wall dividing the historic ground from the road, caught at the double meaning of Mrs Dumaresque's remark, and fell to moralizing. "When, as you say, the *débris* is cleared away, and well-bred people lose no time about that, you know. Corpses and caissons and the like belong to the realistic school."

"We visited battle-fields by the dozen while abroad," observed complacent Clara. "Waterloo, Flodden, and Marston Moor among them. You are quite correct in pro-

nouncing them hopelessly uninteresting in appearance, Mr. Gates."

She was looking well to-day. The walking party given in her honor was, thus far, a pronounced success. The weather was perfect, cool and clear without being blustering, and a recent shower had settled the dust. Their way had lain, for the most part, through balsamic woods inter-threaded by little paths and bridle-roads, each turn revealing vistas of green shade shot by arrowy sun-rays. The brighter foliage of the June-berry and maple broke up the sombre effects of the darkly massed evergreens, and in the forest depths slender, supple birches stood, wraith-like.

Clara's love for walking was more nearly a passion than any other of her well-regulated tastes. She had averred, as they reached the battle-ground, after making the half-circuit of the Island, that the further she walked the stronger she felt.

"Another coincidence — be Ja-awve!" cried ruddy Bertie, who had previously noted that his knickerbockers, tennis shirt, and cap were precisely the same shade of blue as Mrs. Morgan's suit — "(and they might just as

well have been on swearing terms — don't you know?) I got my second wind an hour ago, and am good now for twenty miles."

It was diverting to witness his imperturbable efforts to establish a footing of good-fellowship with the dignified Lisbonian. He shocked her twenty times a day, apologizing as often when he found this out: she schooled and tried to repress and tone him down, civilly but firmly, and he arose to the surface after each tap, fairly shining with good humor, and capable of other and more audacious offences.

She did not resent his comparison of himself to her, and in phraseology borrowed from the ring. He had been especially attentive to her the whole morning, keeping close beside her for a mile at a time, chattering like the bright boy he was, and hearkening respectfully to all she said. Emmett took charge of Gem, and his wife's observation of this increased her content with the day, the excursion, and herself. She whispered confidentially to her inmost soul as Bertie dusted a stone with his handkerchief, and Mr. Romeyn folded her shawl into a cushion to soften the rugged seat, that the reputation of belleship was easily attainable, if one's self-

respect did not hold her back from entering the lists — and if the game were worth the candle.

"Don't trouble yourself, I beg!" she protested, graciously, when Bertie raised her umbrella and held it over her. "I do not mind the sun. I never have headaches — on land," — provoked to feel that she blushed.

If Gem had divined the unpleasant "tang" left upon her cousin's conscience by the simulation of indisposition on Saturday afternoon, she could not have interposed more opportunely with her remark upon battle-fields.

"Indeed," proceeded Mrs. Morgan, unconscious that her neat nuggets of information and deduction were a more realistic touch than the *débris* to which Bertie had alluded, "I suppose it is the same with almost everything people travel to see. Half the interest we take in such places arises from historic or romantic association. The particular battle fought here took place during the French and Indian War — did it not?"

Her eye directed the query to Mr. Romeyn, and, with unfailing courtesy, he hesitated before setting her right. It is safe to affirm

that the placid catechist was the solitary member of the group who did not recall her husband's ill-starred historical *résumé*, and her reception of it.

"The battle was fought on August 4th, 1814," began Mr. Romeyn, with becoming diffidence. "The island was then thickly wooded, but the highway was the same we see now. The Americans beached their boats at British Landing, — so-called from the disembarkation of the English troops there two years earlier, — and marched up to this point. This open space, then surrounded on three sides by woods, was a *cul-de-sac*; for there was an Indian behind every tree. Major Holmes, who had been advised to wear plain clothes that day, and had answered that he would not skulk behind a citizen's coat, fell at the first fire, — over there, — " pointing to the right. "He was riddled with bullets. His men dragged the body to the fence and covered it with rails to prevent the savages from finding and mutilating it. Three officers were killed by the same volley. The Americans retreated, with great loss, to their boats."

"Were they not pursued?"

"No; Indians will not fight in the open,

even against inferior numbers, if they can find a cover."

The battle-field, now an orchard, was thrillingly still. Each trunk was the centre of a round of well-defined shade; the noon-day sun burnished the broad blades of meadow-grass, and drew upright lines along the tree-boles that had sheltered the savages that bloody day. Two cows ruminated upon their noon-day meal in the shadow of palisades a hundred years old. A superannuated horse cropped the turf in a sunny corner.

"Oh, *dear!*" The long-drawn sigh was Gem's. "It is such a nice, peaceful world, if people would only let it alone!"

"But they *won't*, you know!" Bertie, seated at Clara's feet, his blue-stockinged legs crossed at the ankles, plucked up grasses and bit them while he talked. "And, be Ja-awve! when one thinks of Indian warfare, and how their methods are the same now as then, you know, there does seem to be a divine necessity for blood-letting upon a large scale, upon occasion, don't you know, if you might only choose your ground and subjects, you know."

Thus began an argument on the Indian question between him and Mrs. Morgan, who had lately read *A Century of Dishonor*, which lasted until they had left the public road for a tortuous by-way dividing the heart of the virgin forest. It was a funny debate. Clara, erect as the aborigines whom she championed, chin and eyelids level, stepping over stone and tussock as upon a spring floor, turned out sentences from the patent lathe of an intellect trained to carry rather than originate. Bertie lounged along at her side, swinging a stout stick he had cut in the bushes, and in the intervals of her paragraphs, delivered in his gentlest drawl denunciations against Sioux, Iroquois, Choctaws and Nez Percés, so charged with bloodthirstiness that Clara's auburn curls stiffened in the hearing.

"I have too much respect for your real intelligence to believe for a moment that you are serious," Karen, almost overtaking them with Mr. Romeyn, heard her say. "For myself, I consider the subject too momentous for sportive treatment. These are our fellow-creatures, our brothers and sisters—"

"Beg pardon, there!" interrupted Bertie, mildly. "The unity of the human race is a mooted question, don't you know?"

"That is the cavil of the scientist. It was the stronghold of the Southern slave-driver. We all sprang from one root. We are scions of the same stock. You and the hated Indian — hated because of what our cruel injustice has made him to be — are members of one body —"

"Beg pardon again! You ca-a-n't mean that he is one le-e-g and I another, so to speak?"

"If you choose to put it in that way." In the Lisbon Seminary the three-lettered monosyllable had no place in polite talk, but Clara bore up creditably. "We are integral portions of the body politic."

"Then, be Ja-awve!" swept by the horror of the thought into momentary forgetfulness of his usual fine courtesy, — "I say, amputate forthwith, and at any cost, you know! We'd better *stu-ump* it for the rest of our natural lives!"

The absurdity, made trebly ludicrous by manner and intonation, raised a shout from the four who were, by now, close upon the

disputants. Bertie's arm was twitched violently from behind at the same moment.

"Eh! beg pardon?" said he, looking over his shoulder in cherubic simplicity.

Mr. Romeyn had dealt the rebukeful pinch, but it was Karen who at that instant exclaimed: —

"There is Friendship's Altar! Shall we stop and sacrifice upon it?"

Emmett and Gem gayly led the way to the great boulder, cushioned with moss and draped with vines. As the party was broken into single file by trees and brushwood, Clara found Mrs. Dumaresque directly in front of her. Ten seconds ago she would have declared that no temptation could ever make her so far forget pride and ladyhood, but she bent forward and dropped a dozen words, sharp and cold as sleet, into her ear: —

"Your interference was well meant, Mrs. Dumaresque, but I can protect myself!"

She had only time to see the rush of pained surprise into the expressive eyes turned quickly upon hers, and they were with the others at the base of Friendship's Altar.

"You know the legend, I am sure?" Mr.

Romeyn appealed to Karen. "We have never found you at fault yet."

She was very pale; her breath came irregularly; as she laid her hand upon the age-blotched granite, it shook, but her voice was firm and sweet.

"There must be a first time to everything, you know. I know of no story connected with the rock."

"Then make up one!" demanded petted Gem. "It would be a thousand times prettier than any fussy old Island tale!"

"That goes without saying," assented unsuspicious Emmett, smiling affectionately at his old playfellow.

Color and light swept back into Karen's face; a musing smile stirred her lips slowly. She stood for a moment, with downcast eyes, then began with the grave simplicity which gave nameless and irresistible charm to her narrations:—

"Once upon a time—a very long time ago—six friends arrived at this great rock by as many different ways. Each had his or her own home and work in the wide world, and since they had not concerted to meet here on that day, each was surprised to see

the others. But — being friends tried and true — they were glad of the day and hour that brought them together in this lovely, secluded spot. They sat down upon fallen trunks and upon mossy stones, and talked long and lovingly of what each had felt and suffered, and, above all, *done* since their last parting. The big boulder was quite bare then: rain had stained the sides, and frost had left crackles over the surface like wrinkles in an old man's face. A lightning bolt had split upon the top, and scored deep lines on the gray forehead. These trees were here, however, and if we could understand what they are whispering about, I think we should hear some of the sweet things they heard that day from the six friends.

"Did I tell you that three were men and three women? They had bread and wine in their wallets, and ate and drank together — a sort of love-feast it was to them all. And, by and by, when the sun struck level through the woods, and the shadows began to grow cool, one of the young men climbed to the top of the big stone, that may have been dropped here during the war of the Titans,

and broke a full bottle of red wine upon the scarred forehead, and christened the lonely boulder 'Friendship's Altar.'

"As he did this, and they all said 'Amen!' a young girl, with trustful blue eyes and a merry mouth," — in saying it, she smiled at Gem, — "espied in a seam of the rock a quaint little fern, the leaves of which were set in rather formal fashion, upon a stem, like fine, glossy wire. There were just six sprays of it, and she gave one to each of those whose eyes were sorrowful at the thought of the years and miles that would again divide them. And, because the shining stem was so near the color of the young girl's hair as she stood in the shade, distributing the sprays, the oldest woman there called it 'Maiden-hair fern.' Each took a spray, as I have said, and each promised the rest and his or her own heart that, through all thoughts of the dear ones there present should always run the slender, steady thread of perfect trust, holding all fast and in seemly order.

"The next year, the older woman whom I have mentioned made a pilgrimage to the rock — alone — and saw that a strange thing

had happened. Rich moss had covered the scars made by the lightning, and, following the track of the red wine, had spread a velvet mantle over the rock. As for the maiden-hair fern, a dozen sprays had sprung up for every one the girl with the sweet eyes and laughing mouth had gathered.

"Must every legend have a moral? Mine has none, unless it be that Heaven blesses true hearts, and that love grows with the giving."

While she talked, Bertie had plucked off his cap silently, and the other men as silently imitated him. Gem's eyes were like dewy gentians, her red lips apart and tremulous with a smile that would not let her speak in accepting her share of the sprays Karen now playfully gathered from a rift in the rock and offered to the party. Taking a tiny note-book from the velvet bag hung at her side, the girl laid the sprigs between the leaves, and put the book back in the reticule. Bertie raised his to his lips before pinning it securely in the side of his cap; Mr. Romeyn gravely shut his up in his pocket-book, and Emmitt asked his wife for a pin to make his fast in his buttonhole.

Her little laugh was thin and high.

"Wouldn't it be safer done up in tissue paper and kept in the left-hand vest-pocket? But there is your pin! I hope the rest of you have shoes as stout as mine. The Titans selected a boggy spot in which to drop the boulder. I am afraid the Happy Six had catarrhs and rheumatism after their picnic."

"That may have been the reason that only one dared come back the next year," rejoined Karen, with perfect temper and breeding. "In the second edition of the story I will guard against such harrowing possibilities by mentioning that they had Peruvian bark as well as port wine in their wallets."

Mr. Romeyn was at Clara's side when they regained the road. Bertie was with Gem, and Emmet, for the first time that day, became Mrs. Dumaresque's escort.

Ascertaining this by a backward glance, Clara quickened her pace.

"I believe I did get chilled in that damp hollow!" she said, nervously. "I must walk fast to get warm."

The dignified bachelor kept step with her, handing her over ruts and holding back

boughs with assiduity, the more exasperating to her irritated spirit because she had to be obliged to him for what provoked her to snappishness.

They walked so fast that they were virtually alone in the green gloom of the woods when they reached Scott's Cave, the terminus of the road. Bertie and Gem were just in sight at the end of the leafy vista when Clara broke in upon her companion's courteous tale of American caves.

"Mrs. Dumaresque is an actress of uncommon ability. Do you know in what dramatic school she was graduated?"

The common-place man faced her full, his features unchanged, save for the kindling light within the somewhat dull eyes. With one hand he lifted his hat, with the other he pointed upward.

"I believe," he said, deliberately, as he might have named London or Munich, "she had her degree from Heaven!"

CHAPTER X.

THE pedestrians had visited, and Bertie, at Gem's order, had probed, as far as a twelve-foot pole would reach, the mysterious fissure that bisects the Island, the mossy sides of which are overhung with creeping plants, while the unfathomed depths are choked with the fallen leaves of centuries. They had peeped into, without entering, Henry's Cave, where the white fugitive from the Michilimackinack Massacre, in 1763, passed his first night in hiding without suspecting that what he had lain upon in the darkness was, as he tells us he discovered at "day-break," — nothing less than a heap of human bones and skulls, which covered all the floor." Gem, sure-footed as a chamois, had climbed with Bertie to the Devil's Oven in Sugar Loaf Rock, and the divergence from the high-road to Scott's Cave was proposed by the same tireless explorer.

"Her tastes being ca-a-v-ernous, as well

as osseous, you know," remarked Bertie, resignedly, as she knelt to peer into the black recess. "Henry's Cave would have filled the bill exactly had not the skeletons been carted off by her fellow-ghouls. She hopes against hope to find mortuary meme-e-ntoes here, — don't you know?"

Without deigning reply or glance, Gem ducked her pretty head and disappeared in the cave. In a twinkling Bertie darted in after her, and before Clara could look virtuously aghast, Mrs. Dumaresque gathered her skirts about her, and, stooping low, followed them.

"May I have the pleasure?" said Mr. Romeyn, extending his hand to Mrs. Morgan, as he might ask her to dance.

"Thank you! I prefer open air and sunshine," — with politeness that was bitingly punctilious. "But do not let me keep you."

He bowed and vanished into the wide, low mouth of the rock.

Husband and wife were left to themselves without the crevice, from which issued a hum and jumble of reverberant voices.

"Let us go in!" pleaded fun-loving Emmett. "It is part of the programme."

"I shall stay here, by your leave. One must draw the line somewhere!"

Gem's face, alive with glee, showed in the aperture like a nodding daisy thrust out of a rabbit-burrow.

"Have you a newspaper, Mr. Morgan? We have dry leaves and matches, and are going to build a fire. *Do* come in, Cousin Clara!"

Clara shook her head, with her faint semi-smile. Emmett produced a morning paper, and proceeded to cut balsam and cedar twigs for fuel. He was on his hands and knees, passing them in to the fire-builders, when his wife exclaimed: —

"Get up! quick! Here comes a riding party!"

Three equestrians were entering the irregular vista of greenery, bowing their heads to avoid hanging boughs. As they approached, Mrs. Morgan recognized Captain and Mrs. Dale, and, a second later, the officer with the scar upon his cheek, she had last seen upon the yacht.

The situation was embarrassing. The red glare within the cave was that of a furnace, or the Devil's Oven in full blast, and as the

riders reined in their horses to greet the young couple. Bertie's voice, hoarse and resonant as the drone of a blue-fly in a bottle, was heard reciting: —

> "Black spirits and white,
> Red spirits and gray," —

joined by Gem's dulcet treble in a musical wobble, —

> "Mingle, mingle, mingle!
> You that mingle may."

"Incantations go naturally with caverns," said tactful Mrs. Dale. "How fortunate that we are in time for the illumination!"

And the Captain — "Scott's chimney draws well! Mrs. Morgan, let me introduce my friend, Major Kane."

The Major lifted his hat with the air of a well-bred man, and as Emmett was named, smiled.

"A pleasant episode in our excursion!" he said, taking his cue from his friends.

Then, seeing Clara color more deeply at the shriek of hollow laughter issuing from the grinning rock, Mrs. Dale said a few words of cordial hope that the party would rest at the Fort on their way home, and the three cantered away.

"How horribly annoying! People have no right to subject others to such humiliation!" ejaculated the poor bride. "I wish I had never come out with them! A woman of thirty-four and a man of thirty-seven ought to understand the first principles of decorum. So much for intimacy with fast society women!"

Emmett ceased to laugh, There was a warm spark in his eye while he listened.

"I thought you were too good-tempered and too sensible to take offence at a bit of harmless amusement," he said, quietly. "What could Mrs. Dumaresque do but follow those children into the cave, unless she had preferred the rôle of prude and spoil-sport?"

Every word froze Clara into coldness more deadly than her previous show of anger. "Prude" and "spoil-sport" were ugly terms in the ear of a month-old wife.

"I beg your pardon!" in her clearest accents. "My antecedents are my excuse for non-appreciation of such exhibitions."

"Then, for Heaven's sake, rise above your antecedents!" began Emmett, when Gem popped out of the rocky chamber, and the other revellers followed.

"It was fun alive!" averred the girl, unmindful of the changed moral atmosphere into which she had plunged. "There was room for a dozen people. We made the fire upon a ledge like a mantel. We couldn't see a flue, but *something* drew beautifully! And the floor was as dry —"

"As the bones that weren't there!" finished Bertie, teasingly.

It was chagrin, rather than relief, to Mrs. Morgan, that nobody seemed to notice her civil hauteur then and during the tramp through the sinuous paths leading to the lunch-ground. Mr. Romeyn and Karen were the pioneers: Bertie and Gem laughed and quarrelled in their wonted fashion, as far behind husband and wife as Mr. Romeyn's faultlessly clad figure, holding back intrusive branches that Mrs. Dumaresque might pass untouched, was in front.

A loaf of refined sugar bruises the smiting hand as surely as granite. Emmett's temper was sweet and sound, but he could be resolute to stubbornness. Clara was behaving foolishly, in his opinion. He hoped to Heaven she would not mature into such a pattern of pious propriety, prudence, and prejudice as

her mother, Mrs. James Cameron, the first lady of Lisbon. And, since he cherished the belief that if Mrs. Cameron's estimable spouse had assumed command of the domestic forces early in the campaign it would have been well for wife, husband, and children, it behooved him, Emmett Morgan, to profit by the experience of his worthy, but hen-pecked papa-in-law. As a beginning, he would leave Clara to find her senses, unhindered and unhelped by him. Not that he nursed his righteous indignation, or showed symptoms of sulking. Before they came in sight of the luncheing-place, he espied an element of the ridiculous in the recent "spat." He had impatiently advised Clara to rise above her antecedents. In cool patience, he decided the counsel to be excellent. A few more lessons to this effect would cure her of sundry ways and notions unworthy of so noble a creature. He did not in the least divine that her petulant disapproval of the prankish episode of the cave bonfire had deeper root than in prudish dread of escapades that threatened every-day proprieties. The tone of the festal party was not discordant to him. He fell in readily with holiday freak and fancy, knowing the

participants and their order — which was his own — too well to fear lest either should be carried too far.

It was a disagreeable surprise when Clara met, with eyes green and shallow with cool disdain, the sunny look he turned upon her when the spider-like uprights and ladders of the Fort Holmes observatory loomed above the trees.

"We will find our lunch there, I suppose," he remarked. "Are you very tired?"

"Not at all, thank you!"

Each accent might have been clipped out with a metal die.

"You have a good appetite, I hope?"

"Very good — I am obliged to you!"

They had come out into the clearing about the spidery structure. In the shade of the environing trees were a wagon and two carriages.

Mrs. Dumaresque and Gem cried out simultaneously with delight. Mrs. Manly reclined in her low-hung phaeton; Mrs. Gillette sat at her side. The plot of bringing the two mothers to the sylvan feast had been arranged between Messrs. Romeyn and Gates, even Emmett being ignorant of it. A cloth was

laid upon the grass, and waiters from the hotel had spread upon it a collation brought from the spring-wagon. Carriage cushions and rugs were provided for the ladies: the empty carriage was to convey them home should they desire to drive the rest of the way.

"How admirably you have ordered everything — the weather included!" said Karen, by and by, to the senior manager. "We have not encountered even a cross zephyr; the mayonnaise is in the serenest mood conceivable, and the ices are in good form. You might make a fortune as comptroller of *al fresco* entertainments, if you would turn your mind to this important branch of industry."

"Thank you! I shall treasure the compliment, and lay away the hint for serious consideration. The eternal fitness of things should have secured 'Queen's weather' for us to-day."

His bow and glance directed the speech — not to the nominal queen and motive of the fête, but to Mrs. Dumaresque. Clara's swollen heart bled slow drops of angry mortification. She had been fooled and *used* in the service of this unblushing *intriguante!* Under

cover of honoring her as bride, stranger, and guest, opportunity was afforded her rival to shine, and to strengthen her hold upon every man there — Mrs. Morgan's husband not excepted.

"My dear Clara," said Mrs. Manly from her cushioned nest, "you are paler than I like to see you. Positively, *you* shall not walk back, whatever these ultra-muscular women may attempt."

Blow upon blow! Was she to be credited, then, with *nothing* which could compare with the accomplishments of her who had never looked handsomer and healthier than as she arose to her feet, and, swinging her broad-brimmed hat by the strings while she talked, looked up to the observatory they proposed to climb, apparently deaf to the impending discussion?

"I was never in better health and spirits," asserted Clara, rising likewise, and speaking faster than usual. "And, if the sovereign of the day will permit, I will remain with her suite to the end of her progress."

Still Karen did not seem to heed aught save her chat with Bertie and Gem. Cleopatra-Skewton accosted her loudly.

"Dearest Mrs. Dumaresque! You lose *all* the nice, loyal speeches made to you."

Karen turned a face so sunshiny and sweet that even Clara fancied that her dart had fallen short of the mark.

"To *me!* I heard all Mrs. Morgan said. But I supposed she was apostrophizing herself — referring the question to the only authority our queen regnant should acknowledge — her own royal judgment."

Bertie began the clapping of hands that applauded a retort more courteous and graceful than written words can convey.

I would keep before the reader's mind the truth that Clara Morgan was a *good* woman, a sincere Christian who, theoretically, yet honestly, lived in charity of thought with her neighbor. It is equally true that, at that instant, she, for the first time in her placid life, knowingly hated a human being. The tyranny of social intercourse forced her patent smile to lips that must not quiver. She had no repartee ready fit to offer in payment for the compliment of which she was the reluctant recipient, but her mute blush served her turn as well.

Mrs. Manly patted her shoulder, approvingly: —

"Good by, love! We old ladies will be jogged back to easy chair and sofa. But this day will be a star in memory, always. Keep an eye upon my giddy girl, please, Mrs. Dumaresque; and, Gem, darling, don't tax her indulgence too far!"

The original party of six rambled around the sunken earthworks, traced the foundation of the ruined magazine and the subterranean passage conducting from it to the officers' houses, and then mounted the combination of trestle-work and staircase which formed the skeleton tower. From the platform at the top, a glorious panorama of woods, waters, and islands lay beneath them on all sides. Mrs. Dumaresque, one knee upon the wooden bench that ran along the inside of the railing, was looking at a distant point of land through the field-glass steadied for her by Mr. Romeyn, when rapid feet were heard ascending the stairs.

"I saw it very distinctly," said Karen's full, mellow voice, as she stood again upright. "Perhaps Mrs. Morgan would like to look —"

In turning, she was brought face to face with Captain Dale and Major Kane.

A gasping groan escaped her; she made a hasty movement backward, which Clara subsequently interpreted into an impulse to cast herself headlong from the tower. At the moment she was so startled by the sudden reel toward the low rail that she sprang forward, and caught her detested rival by both arms.

CHAPTER XI.

It was in keeping with the fine courtesy innate in Karen Dumaresque, and which never forsook her, that the first words formed by her livid lips, when her senses rallied to do her will, were "Thank you!" to the woman who had probably saved her life.

Sinking then upon the bench, she pressed her fingers upon her eyes, motionless for a minute, while Gem folded her arms about her, and Mr. Romeyn raced down the steps to get a glass and carafe of water from the waiters who were repacking the table service. Bertie fanned the half-conscious woman with his hat, and Clara, withdrawn to the other side of the small platform, scrutinized the scene with calm severity.

"It *looked* like vertigo!" she said, in answer to Captain Dale's subdued inquiry. "She was apparently perfectly well an instant before the attack."

"I am perfectly well now!" responded

Karen, unexpectedly, lowering her hands and sitting upright. "It was a horrible giddiness that overtook me. How are you, Captain Dale? Please don't suspect me of getting up a scene. I had been looking through the spy-glass, and forgot how high I was above the ground."

The first sentences were articulated as if her tongue were slightly clogged; the last, easily and in her natural voice. In uttering the concluding clause she moved her head as if to get a better view of the stranger standing in the rear of the party.

Captain Dale, obeying her gesture, turned toward the guest, who had gone down a few steps of the upper staircase and, one hand upon the rail, seemed irresolute whether to stay or take flight.

"I am relieved to know that our abrupt appearance did not startle you," said the Captain. "We met Mrs. Gillette and Mrs. Manly at Point Lookout, but they did not tell us you were here. We frightened *them*, too," — laughing apologetically. "May I introduce my friend and fellow-culprit, Major Kane?"

Mrs. Dumaresque's visage settled into reso-

lute composure while he spoke. Still pale, but perfectly self-possessed, she arose to acknowledge the introduction. Even her eloquent eyes were subject to the tyranny of will.

"Unless I mistake," — not losing hold of his eyes while she said it deliberately, as if summoning memory to bear upon the subject, — "Major Kane and I are not strangers. Were you not the guest, for a few days, of Captain Hart, at Vancouver Barracks, in the autumn of 1880?"

The man looked dazed — more confused than might have been expected from one of his age and profession — then brightened to catch the clue thrown out, and bowed profoundly.

"I was!" he said, respectfully. "And I recollect you perfectly, Mrs. ——"

"Dumaresque!" Karen supplied the name almost before he hesitated. "The world is a little ball to army people. They are all the while running against their fellow-Arabs — or ants. Can you tell me where the Harts are now?"

They stood apart from the rest, chatting quietly, yet audibly, of one old acquaintance

after another, until the motion to descend was made. Major Dale reiterated his wife's invitation to call at the Fort on the homeward walk, and offered his services as pathfinder. He addressed invitation and offer to Mrs. Dumaresque, assuming her to be the leader of the expedition, and naturally in so doing, fell into place on one side of her, Mr. Romeyn keeping the other. Emmett was in the middle of a sentence to Gem Manly, and without dispossessing Bertie of his place, walked along with them. The unpremeditated assignment of escorts threw Clara and Major Kane together in the narrow road. Sure that her husband would soon join them, she lost no time in beginning the task laid upon her by conscience and pique.

"There is a free-masonry — an *entente cordiale* between army-people, let them meet where they will," she observed, agreeably. "Although I suppose Mrs. Dumaresque knows comparatively little of her husband's brother-officers since his death. Were you acquainted with him?"

Major Kane looked surprised — doubtless at her frank inquisitiveness. She knew it to be underbred, but the opportunity was brief

and golden. *Something* lay back of the specious show of the popular woman. The wife she sought to supplant in her husband's regard might be the chosen instrument of Heaven to unmask the syren.

"I met him several times," said her companion, curtly.

Clara drove on undauntedly.

"Were you ever on the same post?"

"Yes — once for a short time," surprise evident now in accent as in look.

"Was he so *very* handsome and fascinating as people say? Mrs. Dumaresque's taste is too just to allow her to play the sentimental relict, and she never mentions him. But others describe him as an Adonis."

"I believe that was his reputation. Have you been long on the Island?"

"Over a week. Mrs. Gillette was a friend of Mr. Morgan in his college days. Her daughter and he had not met since until we found them here. How long ago did she lose her husband?"

There was no mistaking the disfavor in the serious eyes that grew suddenly keen in glancing down upon the obstinate catechist.

"About eight years, I think."

"They were together, then, at Vancouver Barracks when you visited that post in 1880?"

"Captain Dale!" called Major Kane, abruptly. Are there snakes in these woods?"

The handsome, genial face looked backward over the owner's shoulder.

"Not one upon the Island, my dear Major! Some Iroquois St. Patrick disposed of the species before white man set foot upon Mackinac."

"I must take your word for it, I suppose," said the other, reluctantly. "But more snaky-looking coverts I never beheld!"

Emmett, attracted by the colloquy, fulfilled his wife's expectant fears by quickening his pace to join the pair, and the dialogue fell to the carriage of the two men.

Clara was taciturn and thoughtful. More than ever convinced that some ugly secret lay behind the brilliant life she stigmatized as "a delusion and a lie," she was foiled in every effort to run it down. Her clumsy queries had elicited the unimportant date of Captain Dumaresque's demise, but also put the man who probably knew everything she longed to learn upon his guard against future approaches. For the first time it came

to her now that she might, as she phrased it, in her chagrin, have "tapped the Dales." Army-people all know each other, and the gossip of one post became, by frequent exchanges, the property of another. But Major Kane would repeat the substance of his colloquy with the inquisitive bride to his friends and caution them to discretion. The very free-masonry of which she had spoken would seal their lips.

And Emmett knew it! There was the sharpest sting! The broken sentences she had caught upon the voyage to St. Ignace laid the first stone of the wall rising slowly but regularly between her and her husband. Must those whom God had joined together be put utterly asunder by the wiles of one unscrupulous woman, who had traded upon her widowhood as upon everything else?

Mrs. Dale met them upon the piazza of her cozily comfortable quarters and took the ladies in-doors to brush off the dust and rearrange tresses disordered by envious boughs and hanging vines. Then all were summoned to take a restful cup of tea in the pretty drawing-room.

As Karen sat in a corner of the sofa, tea-

cup in hand, her gracious self-poise was inimitable and attractive. Upon the lapel of the gray jacket that matched gown and hat was the withered fern-spray gathered from Friendship's Altar. Her gauntlets lay on her lap; upon the hand holding the cup and saucer glittered engagement and wedding rings: her cheeks were colored by the long day in the sun-filled air into dusky red that made her eyes larger and more splendid. Her lips were scarlet as with fever; her play of mirthful witticism was enchanting. Not an incident of the excursion was forgotten, and all, including her vertigo upon the tower-top, by graceful travesty supplied food for the laughter which Clara, the one grave auditor, compared mentally to the crackling of thorns under a pot.

"Nothing and nobody can hope to escape our *raconteur*," she could not help saying aside to Mrs. Dale, her patent half-smile apologetic and deprecatory.

"Yet who ever heard her say an ill-natured thing?" replied that lady, still laughing. "She shows everybody except herself in such a charming light that one esteems it an honor to figure in her sketches. I envy you

who see her every day, — and all day, if you like. She extracts sunshine from the most unlikely materials, and is generous in sharing it with others."

They were all alike — infatuated to madness. While almost within arm's length, she knew there lay that subtle, dark mystery which would, if known, change worship into contempt!

They walked down the long slope of Fort Hill in the sunset, through the straggling town, and by the shabby little home of the dead and almost forgotten Sophie B——, up the long plank walk winding around corners to the hotel. The great piazza was thronged with strollers and sitters. It was a work of time to interthread the many groups and make their way to Mrs. Manly's sitting-room. However pressed for time, Mrs. Dumaresque always made a point of transferring Gem to her mother's keeping upon their return from an out-door excursion.

Cleopatra was somewhat the worse for her outing.

"My Idiosynerasy is the sternest of tyrants," she cackled, feebly. "I was utterly prostrated when we reached home, and *quarts*

of valerian and bromide have not set me up. Dear Mrs. Gillette, too, was pale and shaken. We met Captain Dale and a friend, whom he presented as Major Kane, or King, in the woods. They came suddenly upon us at a bend of a lonely road, quite like two gentlemanly foot-pads. The dear Captain apologized most gracefully, — for I could not suppress a little scream, — but dearest Mrs. Gillette did not get her breath for several minutes afterwards. Do sit down for a while, dear Mrs. Dumaresque, and tell me all that happened after we left you."

"Thank you! I am a little anxious about Mamma," answered Karen, hastily. "And I am sure you need rest more than company."

"The tenderest of daughters!" murmured Idiosyncrasy's slave, gazing at the closing door. "There is your exemplar, Gem, darling! Copy her! emulate her! you can never excel her!"

"What a noble-looking man Major Kane is!" Clara was pulling off her gloves and feigning to inspect her hands for traces of sunburn. "Mrs Dumaresque had her fright, too. The two officers climbed the observatory while she was looking through the field-

glass, and she nearly swooned. Major Kane is an old acquaintance of hers."

"Probably a friend of her lamented husband," nodded Mrs. Manly, sympathetically. "She has an exquisitely sensitive organization. One can think what a queen she must have been among men so distinguished for gallantry as the defenders of their country. I dote upon the military myself. Not that I should be willing to have my angel-petsy fall in love with one —"

"You do not wish to have her copy Mrs. Dumaresque in *that*, then?"

The emphasis, more strong than sweet, jarred upon Gem's ear. Her wits, always alert, were phenomenally active when Karen was under discussion.

"You are not as fond of Mrs. Dumaresque as the rest of us, Cousin Clara," said the outspoken young partisan, with rising complexion. "What has she done to displease you?"

"My child! what a preposterous misconception!" Yet rational Clara was glad that the light was at her back when she said it. She felt that her forehead reflected the glow of Gem's cheek. "It is not my way to become hopelessly enamored of strangers.

Recollect, I have known your fascinating friend just eight days. I am ignorant of her antecedents and character, except as I have gleaned hints of these from hotel gossips. A year from this time I may answer you more intelligently."

She had extricated herself from the corner in which the girl would have pent her. If her disclaimer should, also, act as a salutary caution to the too credulous mother of an artless daughter as to the danger of watering-place intimacies, the model woman would have scored one for prudence and virtue.

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. GILLETTE did not appear below stairs on Tuesday; and although her daughter occupied her usual place at the breakfast and lunch table, her admirers saw her nowhere else. Her mother was far from well, and needed her. On Wednesday morning the same report was made.

"Couldn't you help nurse her — or something?" asked Emmett of his wife, apropos to this intelligence. They were setting out for a drive, and in speaking he cast a solicitous glance at a closed window upon the second floor.

"My *dear* husband!" It was her pet exclamation, and occasionally and unaccountably rasped the auditor's ear. "Credit me with a modicum of common courtesy! I have offered my services twice in the neatest terms an unimaginative woman can muster. Happy turns of speech are not my forte, you know, but my intentions are of the best."

Emmett was a good driver, but his jerk upon the reins was unscientific. Under the surprise of the admonition, the horse, whose intentions were also of the best make, had whirled them half a mile down the road before the husband — no longer, alas! the bridegroom — answered: "I do not doubt that, my dear. Only — a hotel is a dreary place for an invalid — almost as dreary as a college dormitory. I recollect how, when I had measles in my sophomore year, Mrs. Gillette had me brought over to her house, and nursed me as a mother might."

"My *dear* husband!" provoked to tautology and temper, — "You really must *not* depend upon such a poor, commonplace creature as myself to pay *all* your college debts. You should have married a woman richer in expedients and accomplishments."

"May I trouble you to hold the reins while I open the gate?" — calmly civil.

They were at the entrance of Island Park, — a romantic tract, owned by a wealthy Chicagoan, whose generous kindness in permitting the stranger to walk or drive through wood and glade deserves more than this passing notice.

Emmett climbed back to his seat after closing the gate, resumed the reins, and began, forthwith, to tell the story of two Indian mounds he had brought his wife to see. They were overgrown with herbage and the turf of twice two hundred years. Clara thought them uninteresting wens upon the face of Nature, else so fair here. She did not express the opinion. Since Emmett's was the polished, insincere rôle, she was not to be left behind. They chatted cheerfully and almost volubly of the magnificent view from the two pretty cottages on the brow of the cliff; of the depth of color and transparency of the sky, and the mellowed reflection of the heavens in the water; of beach, fishing-smacks, Robinson's Folly, and bath-houses; of steamers and club-cottage; of the comparative cost of building materials here and in New York; of everything pertaining to scene and time. In fine, each entertained the other diligently, and of purpose.

The tacitly arranged scheme was carried out to perfection up to the moment when Mr. Morgan, assisting his wife to alight at the hotel door, hoped, smilingly, and with

no sub-meaning in his clear eyes, that she had "enjoyed the drive," and she rejoined as brightly that it had been "truly delightful."

He stepped back into the light carriage, and, putting the again-astonished horse upon his mettle, drove three quarters of the distance around the Island before he could marvel sadly, instead of angrily, "What under heaven ailed Clara of late?" Would the tangles end in a hopeless knot? Then, it must be confessed, he recalled the resolute placidity of Mrs. James Cameron's face, and wished that his wife did not remind him so often of his exemplary mother-in-law.

Clara stayed her stately step upon the piazza to respond to two or three who accosted her with casual nothings, replying decently and politely, and with manifest interest in subject and speaker. Then she carried — still with unruffled mien and stately gait — her hot and hurt heart up to her room, locked the door, and, falling, face downward, upon her bed, cried bitterly for "Mamma!" with, you may be sure, the accent upon the last syllable.

The dignified First Directress of the Ladies' Pastoral Aid Association of the First

Presbyterian Church in Lisbon (the one of which Rev. Dr. Kirkham was pastor for so many years, you remember) had, like her eldest daughter, the gift of neat speech. Her succinct sayings were Clara's Proverbial Philosophy. Before she wept herself into downright disfigurement and nervous collapse, one recurred to her: —

"Men's hearts may be melted and won by tears, but they must be kept by smiles."

By the time rose-water and a careful lunch toilette had effaced the stains of the salt shower, other saws came to her help: —

"Never attack another woman in the hearing of a man, if you prize his good-will. What passes in the world for chivalry spurs him on to her defence, let her cause be never so bad."

"Shrewdness and patience, backed by right, must finally overthrow even wily wrong."

Clara accepted the promptings of faithful memory as a special Providence. She believed in such — when Providence was on her side.

It was fifteen minutes past the lunch hour when Emmett, just returned from his second

drive, met his spouse at the bottom of the staircase leading down to the rotunda.

"I stayed to finish my letter," she said, naturally and pleasantly. "Mamma depends so much upon hearing everything!"

He did not wrong her so far as to wonder if "everything" included scenes like that of the forenoon. Clara was a true woman, and a proud.

The semblance of restored harmony was made more real by the unusual length of the afternoon walk indulged in by the wedded couple. When Clara was dressed for dinner, the great *salle à manger* was nearly deserted, their table cleared of all plates except their own. The cozy meal, the promenade upon the piazza that succeeded it, the gentle peace brooding above the reunited hearts, were like the earliest days of their dual life — the morning before the shadow fell.

Clara had a quiet hour in which to dream of that brighter time, sitting in Mrs. Manly's parlor when Emmett had gone, at her request, to the smoking-room, and she had offered to relieve Gem's guard over her mother. The Idiosyncrasy still dominated the heroic sufferer. Gem had been awake

much of the preceding night, but refused to resign her post until anæsthetics and opiates began to take effect. Then, upon Clara's insistence, she joined a bevy of girls who besought her to make up a game in the drawing-room.

Mrs. Manly slept soundly now that sleep had come. Clara extinguished the lamp in the outer room, and pushing ajar a shutter of the western window, seated herself near it. The night was strangely sultry. The breeze had swooned upon the bosom of the waters which were darkening under a rising thunder-cloud. Broad wings of gloom, tipped luridly, slowly unfolded in surmounting the distant shore line of St. Ignace. Now and then, steel-blue and brassy gleams quivered over the widening blackness; low mutters of thunder vibrated from land to lake. The band in the gallery over the main entrance of the hotel was playing, with skilful variations, the air of the old song, —

"O fair Dove! O fond Dove!
O Dove with the white, white breast!"

Unimaginative Clara could not but follow the melody and supply the words, as instrument after instrument took up the refrain,

Hour and influence were weird, — the more impressive that few sought that end of the piazza on this evening. The sombre grandeur of impending storm did not attract the average pleasure seekers.

A couple emerged silently and suddenly from a corridor close by, passing so near Clara's window that she could have touched them. Dark though it was, she recognized the graceful outlines of the woman, who paused at the outer railing as if to gaze at the blackening west. Her companion stood a little apart, apparently waiting for her to begin the conversation. A flash of lightning, more vivid than any that had preceded it, revealed their faces before the silence was broken. Karen's voice mingled with the thunder-roll. Her accent was interrogative, but the words were lost. A part of Major Kane's reply was intelligible.

"I saw — and, of course, recognized you when I was here, a week ago. Otherwise, the change of name — "

Karen's face was turned steadfastly westward, and her answer was inarticulate. Major Kane's profile, bent slightly toward her, was a sharp silhouette against the next

blaze of blue fire, and he raised his voice involuntarily above the growl of the thunder.

"Nothing is further from my intention than to persecute you. But, looking dispassionately at the matter, — if you could be brought to tolerate the thought of divorce —" The listener did not catch the next sentence, but a rising gust brought other fragments.

"Your peculiar views" — "Marriage virtually annulled." There his voice dropped from argument hard and stern into pleading. He spoke rapidly; once he threw out his hands in vehemence of reasoning or appeal, and another broken sentence came back to Clara upon the fitful wind.

"God knows I have no plea for *him* — the destroyer of my home!"

She interrupted him imperiously. The lightning struck out needles of flame from her diamonded finger as she seemed to wave him back.

"Yes!" she uttered, passionately. "Despise me if you will as —"

And again, and more energetically: —

"Love him! Yes! and always shall! Why force me to confess it?"

"The sight of me is hateful to you, I

know," began Major Kane, in reply. Then, for ten minutes all was pantomimic, and dimly visible even to eyes as keen as those that peered between the half-open shutters.

Mrs. Manly slept heavily, her sonorous breathing irritably audible to Clara's strained senses. The band played in *piano* the wailing refrain: —

"O fair Dove! O fond Dove!"

The dense purple cloud mounted rapidly; the scimitar of the lightning, swung fast and high, clove it to the heart as it fled before the cruel strokes. Then fell the rain, slant and sharp, driving the man and woman backward against the inner wall. Clara crouched beneath the window-ledge, as the shutters were shaken apart by the gust, one blowing shut, and the other flapping against the house.

"Are you pleading for yourself, too?" asked Karen, almost in Clara's ear. Her accents were incisive with impatience or disdain. "Do you wish to marry again?"

He gave a short, harsh laugh.

"Tempted by former experience, I suppose?" — bitterly.

"I beg your pardon," said his companion, as in sudden remorse. "I am mad, almost, with the memories you have raised. Let us make an end of this scene. My consent is not necessary for your release. The case is plain — " speaking low and fast, with a metallic ring in her voice that told of intense excitement. "A man's wife elects to leave him, and — with another man — " bringing out the last words defiantly. "The deserted husband wishes to make it legally possible for her to marry that man — or any other, we will say. The law adjudges the husband to be the injured party. Eight years of desertion would annul the marriage — if you wish to enter this plea. What have I to do with your action?"

"If you would but listen patiently."

Karen turned abruptly to the window, and looked into the room. Clara felt her hurried breath and checked her own in terror of threatened discovery.

"This is no place for such talk," Karen said, apparently satisfied that the chamber was unoccupied. "We risk detection at every turn. The corridor is safer — and a promenade under the chandeliers."

Anything more blood-curdling than the laugh with which she moved away, the horror-stricken eavesdropper had never imagined even in a nightmare.

CHAPTER XIII.

A WOMAN who had seen more of the seamy side of life, whose sympathies were ready and perceptions acute, would not have jumped to the conclusion adopted by Clara as soon as she rallied from the shock of what she had seen and overheard. It may be noted as proof of the unsettlement of her reason and conscience that she suffered no qualms in recollecting her deliberate eavesdropping. To hear something and surmise much was, perhaps, inevitable. In the abstract, her mother, like herself, disapproved of spying and listening, as of picking and stealing: but had Mrs. Cameron been in her daughter's place, she would have crouched as low, and hearkened as eagerly.

Clara crept back to her chair and sat, sick and trembling, under the horrors encompassing her. She was thankful, now, for Mrs. Manly's stertorous slumber and for the emptiness of the rain-swept piazza. She must

think and plan in solitude. A throb of thankfulness for the "wonderful Providence" that had put the coveted clue into her hand somewhat cleared her wits. She blessed her own astuteness, that had divined, so long ago, the wrongness of what everybody else thought right, but even she had not thought to unseal this fuming pit of iniquity. With the prompt violation of probabilities typified by the blind running of a panic-stricken draught-horse, she saw, at once, that Major Kane was this *creature's* wronged and deserted husband! Her name was not, and never had been, Dumaresque. She recalled Emmett's interrogative pause before naming her, on the first evening of their meeting, and Mrs. Gillette's distinct and officious enunciation of the false title. Major Kane, also, had waited for the arch-hypocrite to give him the cue when she greeted him upon the tower as a former acquaintance. Clara had not forgotten, either, the officer's search for the names of mother and daughter in the hotel register, and his emotion upon reading them.

Was this the confession poured into Emmett's ears during the sail to St. Ignace?

"Yet you wear your wedding-ring?" he had observed, and she had answered, "And always shall! Once married, always married!"

With what tissue of lies: with what chicanery of seductive deceit she had wrought upon an upright man who was a pure woman's husband, to condone her guilt, — nay, worse! to force upon his wife intimacy with this disgrace to her sex? Chiefest among the thinker's novel sensations was the consciousness of personal degradation. She, the Christian child of Christian parents, guarded against pollution at every point and in every way, had been thrown *publicly* into hourly association with an "abandoned character"! Her innocence and her social standing, the very honor of her unblemished wifehood, were, of purpose, used to whitewash a damaged reputation.

"As bad as bold! as bold as bad!"

The caustic alliteration said itself over and over to her chafing soul. This — creature — had taunted to his teeth the chivalric and wronged man who entreated her to consent to a divorce that might, by allowing her to marry her lover, measurably rehabilitate her

in the eyes of the world. She evidently "had scruples on the subject of divorce." Perhaps she was secretly and positively a Romanist, probably a Jesuit! Like a flash of light, recurred the talk upon the piazza the evening of the Morgans' arrival, and the story of Father Marquette, told tenderly, over his grave. Such looseness of leniency toward a false faith argued no good, as Mrs. Cameron's pupil daughter should have known and acted upon long ere this.

Another loathsome thought crawled from the horrible pool of suspicion and conjecture to goggle mockingly in her face. The wealthy "eligible" bachelor, whose dignified courtesy and unblemished character set him high above the wash of scandal — was he the partaker of the guilty flight of eight years agone? Were his reverential admiration and Karen's seeming insensibility to it blinds for a relation the heaven-appointed detective blushed in the darkness to name to herself? If so, *what* was Mrs. Gillette — putative saint and embryo angel? To what extent was Bertie Gates, with his guileless face and naïve talk, in their confidence?

Restraining the frantic impulse to awaken

the invalid and communicate the awful discovery that so nearly affected her young daughter, Clara Morgan calmed down, little by little, to her normal judicial frame. There were, she perceived, upon dispassionate weight of evidence, what would, in other eyes, be defects in the tenuity of the same.

She might be positive of the identity of Major Kane with the betrayed and magnanimous husband of Karen Gillette. Would the mosaic of proof she had fitted together convince Emmett, beguiled by syren arts, or Mrs. Manly, whose imprudence in trusting her child to the unprincipled chaperon had committed her to battle for her own reputation and Gem's in defending that of Mrs. Dumaresque-Kane?

The web was wrought with diabolical deftness, and they were all in it.

At ten o'clock Gem ran in, Mrs. Manly's maid at her heels. The girl was profuse in apologies and thanks. There had been dancing in the Casino, and time had sped unnoticed.

"And here is Mr. Morgan, haunting parlors and halls, like a wandering spirit who has lost his other half!" she said, looking toward the half-open door.

Emmett entered, gratefully, meeting his wife as if they had been parted for a month.

"Captain and Mrs. Dale came down just before the shower to call upon some friends who arrived to-day," he said. "I promised to find you and bring you to them." In the corridor he drew her hand within his arm caressingly. "You are pale, dear. You found it tedious sitting so long in the dark, I am afraid."

"I did not mind it," Clara nerved herself to say. "I was glad to rest a little while. Mrs. Manly slept all the time. *Why!*"

The ejaculation was elicited by the sight of Mrs. Gillette, enthroned in an arm-chair, her feet upon a cushion, and surrounded by congratulatory friends, the Dales among them.

"Delightful, isn't it, to have her with us again?" said Emmet, blithely.

"Has she been here all the evening?"

"No. She came down about nine o'clock and took everybody by surprise."

Clara's cheeks tingled. The mother then had been cognizant of the *tête-à-tête* granted to the estranged husband — had waited to receive the report of it.

She could not be cordial to the fair old

sinner, and turning away as shortly as was consonant with bare civility, caught a gleam of surprised disapproval and inquiry from Emmett. This was suffering for righteousness' sake. Spiritual complacency sustained her voice and tempered the heat of the honest Cameron blood. In raising her cool green eyes to Captain Dale's face, she looked and felt mistress of herself, and her husband's superior in *savoir faire*, as in moral instinct.

"It must be flattering to have any one so dependent upon you for happiness as Mr. Morgan seems to be," remarked the gallant officer after a few minor observations. "He was not himself until you appeared. Isn't that true, Mr. Gates?"

"Super-gospelic truth," assented the cherub. "He has pro-owled about the rooms like the deserted Pleiad, don't you know? If Mrs. Dumaresque hadn't ta-aken him in ha-and, he would have made a specta-a-cle of himself, you know?"

"Mrs. Dumaresque!" echoed Clara, involuntarily. "Is she here?"

Following the eyes of the two men, she beheld the incomparable dissembler, flushed, animated, superbly handsome — the cynosure

of a coterie of admirers of both sexes. She had exchanged the black gown worn upon the piazza for a soft woolen robe, pale-gray in color. The trained skirt was paneled, and the sleeves slashed with black velvet; the pointed vest was of the same material, and the V-shaped opening below the throat was filled with rare old lace. Deep lace ruffles fell to her beautiful wrists; the sweeping train, the slope and points of the corsage, enhanced her stature and litheness. Her lips were carmine; her complexion was rich and warm.

Presbyterian Clara thought of the Scarlet Woman, and mentally applied, without scruple or charity, the most strongly flavored epithets her Biblical memory supplied at the call of indignant virtue. So, to her apprehension, might Jezebel have looked to rude Jehu with her "tired" head and painted face, and the audacious radiance of her mocking smile. Had her life depended upon absolute discretion, the wife must have uttered her next sentence.

"My eyes have surely played me tricks! I thought I saw Mrs. Dumaresque deep in talk with Major Kane upon the western

piazza, just now, and she was dressed in black."

"An optical illusion!" smiled the Captain. "She has been in this room ever since we entered."

"And the Major and Romeyn have been offering up burnt sacrifices in the smoking-room for the better pa-art of the evening, don't you know?" put in Bertie, lazily.

Clara's hand went up to her throat. The hysterical grip there was suffocating, and her temples were beating like a drum. The demoniacal wiles of her rival and enemy passed belief. An *alibi* could be proved by fifty witnesses should accusations be brought. Had the creature seen Clara, or suspected a listener, in glancing into the darkened room? Or was this but another proof that she was never off guard, and ever swift with expedients for defence?

"Well?" said Bertie, his mischievous blue eyes seeking Mrs Morgan's. Because they were as blue and as ingenuous as a baby's, they always looked straight and full into other people's, — especially into a pretty woman's. "Is it a case of hallucination, a vision, or mistaken identity?"

The malachite eyes stared back steadily.

"Hallucination, probably. I never dream with my eyes open, and Mrs. Dumaresque could not be easily mistaken for anybody else, even in a confidential nook upon a cloudy night. Nor, for that matter, is Major Kane likely to be confounded with another man. Is he stationed at the Fort?"

With an off-hand air of leaving an unimportant topic for one a trifle more interesting, she accosted the Captain.

"Oh, no! He leaves Mackinac to-morrow, much to our regret. He had malarial fever in Florida last spring, and is off on sick leave still. Most men of his means would resign, and try the benefit of a year or two of travel and rest," was the ready answer.

"He dropped into something neat awhile ago — didn't he?" inquired Bertie, who had a knack of picking up and never forgetting scraps of news.

"Six or seven years back, I think. A childless uncle left him his heir upon condition that he should take his name."

"Kane is not his real name, then!" demanded Clara, with uncalled-for eagerness. "What *was?*"

"I don't recollect. I never knew him until we were thrown together upon the frontier in '84. A series of adventures, some of them dangerous, drew us rather closely together then: but I had not seen him since until his present visit to Mackinac."

Mrs. Morgan leaned back in her chair, and toyed abstractedly with the tassel of her fan until Bertie drifted off to the group about Mrs. Dumaresque. Then the candid hater of subterfuge asked, raising the half-furled fan to hide a demi-yawn which drew down the facial muscles: —

"Is Major Kane married?"

Captain Dale hesitated slightly, but suspiciously, before answering. Clara played with her fan while waiting, turning it over to stroke the feathers on the back of the elegant toy.

"His wife is abroad, I believe. I have never seen her. How gay the rooms are tonight! And what an array of handsome women! Mackinac outdoes itself this season."

Clara began to comprehend that of such stuff as her hourly life were made melodramas and, sometimes, tragedies. A daze and fateful flurry were upon her that reminded

her of shifting scenes and foot-lights. That no striking situations might be lacking to this act, at that instant Mr. Romeyn, side by side with Major Kane, appeared in the doorway. The tall soldier was as tranquil of mien as the correct society man as they made their way toward the spot where Mrs. Dumaresque stood, facing them.

Unmindful of what Captain Dale might think of the brusque action, Clara got up, and as if meaning to cross the room to speak to some one opposite, slipped between and behind groups, looking bored and nonchalant, until she was within ear-shot of Karen. The change of base was timely.

"As I leave Mackinac early to-morrow," Major Kane was saying to the belle of the evening, "I shall have no better opportunity than this to make my adieux."

"I am afraid the Island has not treated you well — you make such a short stay," responded Karen's gentlest, most gracious accents. "Let us hope that the sea will be kinder. When do you sail?"

"Next week. I hope much from the sea air and change of scene. Thank you, for your good wishes. Good by!"

She put her hand frankly into the extended palm.

"Good night! Good by, and *bon voyage!* May you have fair winds, and find health upon the waves. I envy you."

"Thanks!"

He bowed low; a sad, sweet smile leaving his lips to linger in eyes that rested a second upon hers, and left the room by the nearest door.

"A graceful gentleman!" observed a woman at Mrs. Dumaresque's side.

"Yes," answered Karen, calmly. "He is a fine specimen of the best type of our army-men."

Clara interposed with what she meant should be a *coup de grace*.

"I hear"—in tones so thin and high that they shrilled like over-strung wires—"that Major Kane goes abroad to join his wife."

Several people glanced around at her.

The defiant, triumphant accent was like a challenge.

Karen was politely interrogative.

"Ah? He said nothing of his intention to me."

Clara's eyes snapped fire against the impassive ones before her.

"You know, however, that she is abroad?"

"It is quite possible." In saying it, Mrs. Dumaresque referred smilingly to the lady who had commented upon Major Kane's bearing. "Almost everybody *is* abroad this summer. Isn't it Sin Saxon in *Real Folks* — or is it *The Other Girls?* — who calls the stream of international travel 'the European siphon'?"

The *patte de grace* was a failure.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE four days closely succeeding the night of the thunder-shower were, to Clara, long and unsatisfactory. Her object was not forwarded by the fraction of a degree. A morning spent with Mrs. Dale upon her breezy piazza, during which the visitor kept the dialogue resolutely upon army people and army reminiscences, was time and labor wasted. Nor could she decide whether her interlocutor knew too much to be betrayed into divulgations, or too little to suspect that she was cross-examined. She was earnest in praise of Major Kane as man and soldier, but disclaimed personal acquaintance with him prior to his frontier introduction to Captain Dale. She believed that he was married, and that Mrs. Kane was travelling somewhere — she could not say where — with friends. And while Clara sat mute and thrilled, in an agony of earnest attention

the amiable lady pursued the subject, airily: —

"You know, my dear Mrs. Morgan, we army-women must go abroad as grass-widows, if we would enjoy the advantages of foreign travel. Few officers can afford the luxury of an ocean voyage *en famille*, even by paying for the privilege with a tough siege of malarial fever. I do hope Major Kane will be improved by the sea-voyage. He took a slow steamer on purpose."

Of Captain Dumaresque she knew even less than of Mrs. Kane. No! Captain Dale had no list of dead and resigned officers, although such a register was kept in Washington, and could be consulted by the curious on such subjects — of course by obtaining permission of officials there. Nothing could be done without red tape, etc., etc.

This was on Saturday, and as Clara, chagrined and bitter at the scarcity of present providential interpositions on the side of right, went down the zig-zag steps, a riding party of four cantered by the foot of the staircase, without looking in her direction. A few rods further on, they reined up to speak to a solitary pedestrian.

Clara stopped on the bottom step, herself unnoticed. Gem and Bertie rode together; Mrs. Dumaresque was with Mr. Romeyn. It was at her side that Emmett lingered, his hand upon the neck of her horse, his handsome face, bronzed by the Island winds, uplifted, and bright as from the reflection of hers. Karen's seat in the saddle was perfect: her dark gray habit fitted to a charm; the jewelled handle of her whip scintillated living light. While he chatted, Emmett took it from her hand with easy familiarity, and examined it admiringly. Presently he gave it an incautious flick too near the eyes or ears of the spirited horse. The animal reared and shied so violently that the rider lost her balance. Gem uttered a low scream: Mr. Romeyn threw himself from the saddle: Emmett, catching at the bit, was lifted clear off the ground by a second furious plunge.

It was over in the twinkling of an eye. Clara had caught but one terrified breath when Karen was steady in her seat, and the trembling steed under control. Emmett's white, shocked face, seen the more distinctly because his hat had fallen in his spring for the horse's mouth, was the one feature of the

incident stamped upon his wife's heart and brain.

Still unobserved, she waited until the dust raised by the hoofs was laid, and she lost her husband's retreating form at a turn in the road, then returned to the hotel by a more circuitous route than he had taken, carrying with her the picture of the countenance whose livid alarm at the peril of the woman with whom Emmett had dallied by the wayside could mean but one thing.

She behaved strangely for the rest of the day, being alternately gay and pensive.

Her appetite had gone, and what sleep visited her tear-sore eyes that night brought fever-dreams. By morning, she was so haggard, the circles under her eyes were so dark, and her lips so dry, that Emmett entreated her to keep her room, at least until she had breakfasted.

"I wonder," he said, ruefully, his fingers upon the pulse he did not know how to count, "if the air here disagrees with you. Would you like to leave earlier than we have arranged to do? We have taken these rooms for a week longer, but that is of no consequence where your health is concerned."

Softer moisture welled up in the poor woman's eyes. He *was* good and sweet and dear, this whole-souled, simple-hearted husband of hers! And he would be true forever if he were not dazzled and dizzied by the baleful arts of the temptress.

"We will think and talk of that to-morrow," the words stumbling over a big sob. "I don't believe it is the air, but it isn't my way to be irritable and depressed. I am ashamed of myself. I will try to behave more like a sensible woman, and less like a spoiled child!"

Emmett aided her to maintain the resolution by affectionate assiduity of attention. Seeing her bent upon going to church, he ordered a carriage to spare her unnecessary fatigue, and in his very manner of helping her in and out of the vehicle, made her conscious that his every thought was for her comfort and happiness.

The Gillettes were not in church that day. The mother had had a bad night and slept late, and the daughter would not leave her. Karen's absence was an unspeakable relief to Clara's tired nerves. She found voice and inclination to unite in the choral service, and,

upon her knees, felt a healthful tide of tenderness rising in her heart for him who bowed beside her, joining his reverent tones with hers, and of gratitude to Him who had crowned her life with a good man's love — which flooded out of sight the wrecks and reefs of the past week.

"*O God! whose never-failing Providence ordereth all things, both in heaven and earth; we humbly beseech Thee to put away from us all hurtful things, and to give us those things which are profitable for us, through Jesus Christ our Lord!*"

The formula recalled her wandering thoughts, striking a vibrative chord that brought a flood of tears. With head bowed and face hidden in her hands, she remained kneeling, unconscious that the others had arisen for the psalm; unheeding everything but the cry of her soul into the Father's ear.

"*All hurtful things!*" This cruel thing, that was fretting into the fair fabric of her happiness, this vile thing that threatened to lead her belovéd into sin! Being in an agony, she prayed as she had never prayed in her even, happy girl-life; besought the All-merciful for the removal, *by any means*,

of the needless cross laid upon her tender shoulder, — and forgot to add "If it be Thy will!"

When they left the church, her face was sweet and fair with the "clear shining after rain." The fervent prayer of faith had wrought its specific effect in exaltation of the suppliant spirit to the Mount of Vision. She felt *answered* already.

The tranquil, chastened mood lasted long. Meeting Mrs. Gillette and Karen at dinner, she talked kindly and cheerfully with both. Since the "hurtful thing" would surely be removed, she could forgive it as an enemy, *almost* pray for it as a despiteful agency.

Among the unfashionable people whom Mrs. Dumaresque had "taken up" — not patronizingly, but evidently because they interested and pleased her — was a family from a hill township in central New England, who had now been at the great new hotel for a week. The father was a country storekeeper, a Justice of the Peace, and a deacon. His liver was out of order, and Mackinac air had been prescribed. He brought with him his wife and two daughters. Karen, coming one day upon the younger girl, as she was gath-

ering some sweet-brier buds from a wayside bush "for sister to paint," discovered that she was a bonnie and bright lass in spite of her shyness and country-made clothes. Using her as a key to acquaintanceship with the rest of the family, she learned other pleasant and surprising things.

The mother was a graduate of the Boston Normal School, and had educated her children.

"There are not three women in this hotel who are more refined and intelligent than Grace, the elder daughter," said Karen to her mother that Sunday noon. "Yet, since her gowns have not the French fit, and because the whole family bear the stamp of a rusticity which is a thousand removes from vulgarity, they are neglected and ridiculed. There is pathos in the fact — and consolation, too, — that none of them except Grace suspect that they are ostracized. Mrs. Wilkes enters, with modest freedom, into conversation with merchant princesses and railway queens. I heard her tell a knot of them last night that 'George had been solicited to stand for the Legislature this fall, and she hoped he would, Tom being old enough now

to take care of the store, and there was such crying need for Christian legislators!'"

"The New England independence that is content to hold its own, and is too thoroughly kneaded up with self-respect to degenerate into self-consciousness or to become aggressive, is *superb!*"

That evening, Mrs. Wilkes, who was organist in the church "at home," sat down to the piano in the almost deserted drawing-room, and began playing Moody and Sankey tunes.

"Sing something — won't you?" said a fun-loving-at-any-expense youth, lounging in from the corridor after two girls of like stamp. "We were just wishing for some sacred music."

"We always sing on Sabbath evenings at home," said Mrs. Wilkes, in her provincial accent, her mild, broad face lighting up at meeting with a sympathetic spirit. "We have a nice quartette of our own, when my son is with us to supply a tenor."

"But you have a trio here!" exclaimed the girls. "Do sing for us! It would be *too* lovely!"

Mrs. Dumaresque, coming down stairs after seeing her mother comfortable in bed, beheld

a crowd massed about the front windows. It was a heaving, tittering, ill-mannered mass, and Bertie, meeting her with Gem, reported the attraction to be the Wilkes family.

"Who are giving a free concert, you know, with that conceited co-ompound of ca-alf and ca-ad, Compton of Chica-ago, don't you know? as sta-age ma-anager. He and his ga-ang must be ha-ard up for ga-ame, be Jawve!"

When angry, the cherubic always worked the drawl unmercifully.

"I should think so, indeed!" ejaculated Karen. "I thought even him too much of a man to press that sort of material into service. Such exhibitions disgust one with professional society people."

"It's be-eastly, of course, you know," rejoined Bertie to Gem's outburst of reprobation. "There's one comfort, though. The Wilkeses won't find out that they are the laughter of fools and the song of the dru-unkard, don't you know?—unless somebody tells them. There goes "Hold the Fort"! I heard Co-ompton a-ask for it, as I left. Hear the audience appla-ud! There's a ca-at-call from the ga-allery, be Jawve!"

"Disgraceful—isn't it?" observed Em-

mett, who was promenading with his wife upon the lower end of the portico, left clear by the crowd.

"It is unfortunate that they should have subjected themselves to it," said Clara, coolly compassionate. "Can you imagine any one being so unsophisticated?"

Karen stood in the strong light pouring through the wide doors of the rotunda. Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes troubled.

"It *hurts* me, through and through!" Clara heard her say, as the Morgans continued their walk. "I like and respect that family. If this goes on much longer, I am afraid that I shall get *furious*, and insult some dozens of people!"

"When you are ready to begin, com-ma-and us, won't you?" begged Bertie.

At their next upper turn, the Morgans noticed a change in the attitude of the unmannerly press about the windows. An expectant "*Sh-sh-sh!*" was passed from centre to wings; jeers were silenced or whispered. The central corridor, too, was filling fast as the Morgans gained the drawing-room door, moved by the general curiosity to see what was going on.

Karen and her faithful three were conversing with the performers. Mrs. Wilkes, modestly complacent and fairly radiating summer heat, beamed up in Mrs. Dumaresque's face from the music stool; Mr. Wilkes, gaunt, sallow, and raw-boned, in a ready-made Sunday suit, smiled down at her from an altitude of six feet three. His broadcloth made sarcastic revelation of angular shoulder blades and big elbows; lower jaw and chin were squarely relieved against a throat fringe of black whiskers. While Karen talked she laid a caressing hand against the blushing cheek of sensitive Grace; twelve-year-old Amy pressed timidly nearer to the lady upon the other side. Both young faces were perturbed and uneasy.

"It is an imposition, I know," Karen was saying. "The room is stifling, and you have been so long at the piano. But if you will give us one more old favorite, and let us help you sing it, I pledge my word that nobody shall ask you for another note."

"Oh, we are not fatigued," returned Mrs. Wilkes, briskly; "we sing *for hours* at home. On choir-meeting nights, you know."

"But not in such an atmosphere as this!

I am selfish enough to beg for my one hymn. After that I shall stand guard over you and refuse all other applicants."

Her selection was "Nearer, My God, to Thee!"

The air to which the immortal lyric is wedded beyond the possibility of divorce is, happily, one which no amount of misuse can wear threadbare. At the second line Karen's quartette took up the strain. Fifty voices joined them on the third. When they began the second verse, everybody sang. The rush of melody flooded corridors and piazzas, bearing down conventionality, frivolity, and self-consciousness, billowed against the lofty roof of the portico, and escaping resonantly, bounded upward to the stars.

The voices of old men and maidens were blended in holy rapture: young men cast aside their cigars to add deeper tones: children in their beds, the colored waiters in the far dining-room, fishermen in their craft alongshore — one and all — took up tune and words. To this day, *habitués* of and dwellers upon the Island will tell you of the still August Sunday night, when strait and lake and the sky they reflected seemed to listen

while everything that had breath sang "Nearer, My God, to Thee!"

Not even Mr. Wilkes, facing the throng to beat time, at the full length of his gaunt arm, his face, ablaze with heat and pious ardor, dripping like Aaron's beard, could mar the solemnity of song and scene. The electric lights, pendent between the columns and swinging in the musical surge, illumined five hundred faces upraised to heaven in the closing stanza: —

"Or, if on joyful wing,
Cleaving the sky,
Sun, moon, and stars forgot,
Upward I fly,
Still all my song shall be —
Nearer, my God, to Thee!
Nearer to Thee!"

The echoes of the conjubilant waves still rose and fell in Clara Morgan's ears, when she knelt beside her bed to pray for forgiveness of sins and protection during the dark hours, and, most fervently of all, once again, that the "hurtful thing" might be put away from her.

CHAPTER XV.

MONDAY mornings were apt to go heavily for the habitual loungers upon the hotel piazza. Departures were numerous and arrivals few, until the afternoon boats filled up deserted rooms. Husbands and brothers chose the day for yachting and fishing parties, or were off betimes for the city and week-day work.

The day being fine and gossips gregarious, they knotted into basking groups along the front of the big khan, some with a pretence of employment, others with none except "to take the air and sunshine." For this they had come to Mackinac, and the "taking" afforded a pretext for doing nothing else.

Mrs. Gillette had her knitting, and Mrs. Dumaresque her book, in the wide curve of the portico that gave them the view up and down the Straits. Into this generous space Grace Wilkes had brought easel, drawing-board, and color-box, and was engrossed in a

sketch of the arbor-vitæ grove and fountain, with Round Island in the distance. Everybody, excepting the two women nearest the country girl, set down her occupation and apparent absorption in it to a desire to display her accomplishment. Three-fourths of the spectators sneered at her obvious vanity; the remaining quarter pitied her ignorance of the best methods of showing off without seeming to do it.

Clara Morgan, seated at the open front window of Mrs. Manly's room, scanned the group of three with judicial disapprobation. Mrs. Dumaresque had *savoir faire*, however deficient her *portégée* might be in that prime essential of polite society. Clara felt that, were she in the place of the patroness, she would insinuate to the girl what mortifying misconstruction might be put upon her present location and occupation by lookers-on. Karen was spoiling the unsophisticated Wilkeses, instead of correcting their foibles and primitive ideas. It would be truer kindness to let them learn wisdom by bitter experiences. Her only conceivable motive for this misjudged indulgence was the lust for adulation from any and every source, which, as Mrs.

Morgan had discerned long ago, was the leading principle and passion of the meretricious worldling. As was her custom while her mother took her morning sun-bath, Karen read to her in a subdued tone, remitting the task, now and then, to comment upon the book or make a remark to Grace, who listened to the reading while washing in blues, grays, and greens. It was in one of these intervals that Karen saw, bearing down upon the quiet nook, such a body of fashionably attired women, so palpably animated by a common interest, that she looked her amused surprise. Prominent in the van of the deputation was a large, loud, and lavish Californian, a recent arrival, but already garrulously *au courant* with everything and everybody in the hotel.

Gem had complained of her in Clara's hearing as "superhumanly pervasive," and Karen, to whom the speech was made, had laughed at, instead of reproving the flippant thing. Clara recalled the phrase against her will, as the portly matron swam up to Mrs Dumaresque, all dimple and giggle, an open paper in her hand.

"Dearest Mrs. Dumaresque! such a find!

The sweetest little piece of poetry — floatin' on the breeze like a feather from the wing of a fairy! Mackinac *is* a wonderful place! And we all said — at once — that you — must read it aloud — to us. Nobody — else *can* do it — justice!"

If the reader will substitute a giggle for each dash, and a long-drawn breath of hysterical rapture, rising into a crescendo steam-whistle, for the final exclamation point, the effect of the address may be feebly imagined.

Karen took the sheet from the hand which shook with affected laughter.

"A fugitive poem! Who gives me the right to read it?" turning the leaf to see that it was unsigned and undated.

"Oh, the *vox populy!*" giggled the chairwoman. "All of us, in a body! I've run it over. Come! *Commencez!*"

Suspecting some witless trick, Karen hesitated to comply until reassured on this point by a glance along the lines. They were pencilled in a round hand, like a man's for character and legibility.

The little crowd drew up about her, hustling and winking at one another as she began: —

Early Morning at Mackinac.[1]

Night yields to morning, and the fairy island sleeps
On Huron's placid breast. The fleecy covering,
Which water-sprites with magic fingers nightly weave,
Moves lightly on the gently throbbing waves, as moves
The drapery o'er the sleeping form of one we love.
The birds within the arbor-vitæ groves begin,
In piping notes, to tell the near approach of day.
The breezes bring sweet odors from the pine-clad rocks,
And fling the fragrant incense o'er the quiet lake.
Phœbus with laughing eye looks on the drowsy East,
Which straightway blushes as a maiden innocent,
And smiling leaves her couch to greet the coming god.
The fort upon the hill as yet shows naught of life,
Its white walls looming up like spectres of the past,
Hoary with history, and strong, yet beautiful.
The boats at anchor in the bay are touched with light.
Bois Blanc appears; its forest in the distance seems
A bold, deep-graven line made by a master's hand.
Above, with lighter touch, Aurora paints the clouds,
While earth and vapor, lake and sky unite
To form this charming, changing, ever-brightening scene.
And now the far-off light that flashed throughout the night
To guide the mariner goes out: the stars that shone
With equal brilliancy from higher towers grow faint.
The heavy shadows of the night are rolled away.
The misty curtains part and leave the lake revealed.
To clothe its lovely form in well-becoming dress,

[1] By William Porter, M.D.

The sky throws down a robe of blue, flecked o'er with
gold.
The trees, along the shore, in varying shades of green
Embroider it, and as the morning light breaks full
Over Lake Huron, still upon its breast is seen,
Like purest emerald, the Island Mackinac.

Only Mrs. Gillette had seen the vivid red that bathed Grace Wilkes's face at sight of the written paper; her convulsive clutch of her brush; the swift, frightened glance at the treacherous portfolio on the floor at her side. But as Karen lowered the sheet with the last words, a glimpse of the averted face, bent over the drawing until only a line of scarlet cheek showed below the burning ear, told her all.

"It is graphic and graceful," she remarked, slowly, seeming still to scan the handwriting. "We are indebted to the nameless poet who has let us read it here in sight of what he has described so well."

"Hearken! listen to her!" screamed the Californian, clapping her hands and bounding from one foot to the other until the floor trembled. "Very well done, Mrs. Innocence! But it don't go down. Everybody knows who the de Staël" (she said "dee

Stale") "of the fairy isle is. Come, own up! Make a 'clane breast' of it, my dear."

"What fools women can make of themselves!" muttered Clara, in strong disgust, while Mrs. Manly, attracted by the tumult, raised herself from her cushions to peer over her kinswoman's shoulder.

Karen may have been nearer of like mind with her ill-wisher than the latter dreamed, while the shrill-voiced chorus beat their palms together, and cried, the one upon the other, after the manner of the *pro tempore* leader.

"You cannot mean," Mrs. Dumaresque's full tones making themselves audible through rather than above the hubbub — "you do not suppose — really — that *I* am the author of these lines?"

In the energy of denial she had arisen. Otherwise, the effusive chairwoman would have cast herself upon her neck. As it was, she caught her by the shoulders, and shook her playfully in repeating, "Don't — be — over-modest — you — dear — gifted — *genius!*"

"Indeed, Mrs. Liggon, it is not modesty that makes me truthful. I could no more

do such a bit of word-etching than I could scale that cloud overhead. I never wrote a line of poetry in my life!"

"But she looks and talks and *lives* it!" cried Mrs. Manly, explosively, across Clara's shuddering back. "Won't somebody bring that poem to me? I didn't hear more than half of it; and my fair Corinne must positively read it again for my especial and individual benefit!"

The Gillettes did not return to the piazza after Cleopatra's behest was obeyed, and, awhile later, Clara was "happened upon" by Mrs. Liggon, seated in the shaded upper corner of the promenade, busy with her pale buff doylies.

"I have been lookin' for your friend, Mrs. Dumaresque," said the millionairess, dropping into a chair, and reaching forward for a finished square. "How beautiful you embroider! I've just heard how she spells her name; and I want to ask if she's connected, or related, or anything, with a lieutenant in the army, who pronounced his 'De*ma*rick.' Such a lovely fellow! Jo — that's my First — had a ranch in New Mexico, and I lived there three years before he died — poor, dear

man! bein' of a consumptive habit, and what a mercy I didn't ketch it from him — and me so young to be a widow! So this Lieutenant Demarick and his company were rampagin' the country for Injuns, and poor, dear Jo invited him to stay at our house. He was with us better'n a fortnight. The handsomest thing I ever beheld with these mortal eyes! and how any woman could run away from him is more'n *I* can understan'; but they *do* say that to be the case!"

Clara was so white that the few freckles dotting the bridge of her nose came sallowly into prominence. The hands holding stuff and needle were ice-cold and damp.

"An officer, did you say?" Her voice sounded to herself no louder than her heart-beats. "When was this?"

"Oh, I never remember dates!" carelessly. "A few years ago. He was *splendiferous!* Tall, dark, straight as an arrow, and with the divinest smile and gallantest ways!"

Clara took a long breath to carry her through the next question.

"Had he a scar upon the left jaw? I think I may have seen him — once."

"Not when I knew him, my dear. I did

hear, though, that his company was quite cut to pieces soon after he left us. I didn' know as he wasn' killed himself 'till last year, when I met an officer in S' Frisco who told me there was some shady story 'bout poor Appoller-Ad-onis Demarick, an' his wife had skipped with another man — or — my! but ain't *this* doyly a daisy!"

"Apolleraddonis," repeated literal Clara. "What an odd name!"

"You delicious *Article!*" shrieked Mrs. Liggon. "Ain't that too rich! Why don't you call him 'Apollinaris,' and be done with it?"

She beat her knees with her large hands, and went from one strangling fit of laughter into another, until Clara was red with confusion and displeasure.

"One hears of such extraordinary names!" she said, when the other could listen. "De*mar*ick seems such a strange — an incredible pronunciation of Dumaresque, that my mistake is natural. You are sure as to the spelling?"

"Sure as that my name is Liggon, and used to be McCarthy. Seth — that's my Second — he and me took a Youropeian

tower on our wedden' trip, an' our banker in Rome spelt his name, D, u, m, a, r, e, s, q, u, e, and pronounced it *Domarick*. I recollect it, because I always thought when I saw it on cheques an' things, of poor — *Appollerdonis!*"

Gurgle and bubble and squeak recommenced. Clara restrained justifiable ire.

"How old would your handsome Lieutenant be by now?"

The question was unlucky: Mrs. McCarthy-Liggon had reasons (behind rouge and pearl-powder) for discretion as to dates.

"O-h-h! P'raps thirty. — P'raps thirty-five! If there aint Seth waitin' for me in the carriage! My! won't I ketch it for bein' behind time!"

Clara was left to her embroidery and a new clue.

The wind blew strongly all night. Gusts of rain whipped the piazza floor; the windows of Clara Morgan's room rattled fitfully. Too nervous to sleep, she arose at two o'clock, opened the blinds, and sat by the casement until dawn glanced timidly upon waters roughened by much beating into swirling troughs and veasty lines.

She was very miserable. Her sheltered, uneventful life had not fitted her to cope with complications of passion and mystery. A horror of loneliness gat hold of her spirit; an overweening sense of helplessness, very pitiable in one who had so lately avowed herself perfectly happy. She was as tear-washed and wan as the young day when she crept back to bed and buried her face in the pillow with a sobbing whisper: —

"Mamma! if I could only see mamma for one half-hour!"

It was nine o'clock when she awoke. She was alone, and the door of the sitting-room was shut. At the sound she made on opening the blinds, Emmett's anxious face appeared. He had listened eagerly for token of her awakening. The outer room was pathetically orderly when one considered that he had arranged it, and a table, drawn up to the window, with two chairs set well under it, foreshadowed a *tête-à-tête* breakfast.

Rewarded by her pale smile for waiting and work, the husband rushed off to order the most tempting repast the establishment could provide.

"He still loves me, — a little," meditated

Clara, the tears coming again as the mirror reflected the painful workings of her face, while she unbound and combed her hair. "He would pity me if he knew how entirely my heart is his. I used to say that no woman who respects herself would ever enter the lists with another for the possession of her husband's affection. I did not know then how utterly beggared she is without it. Suffering has made me very humble."

Her bath and toilet, by promoting healthful circulation, restored somewhat the equilibrium of judgment.

Emmett was innately upright. His imagination might be carried away captive by seductive arts, yet his heart be left in lawful keeping. He was humane and reasonable. In telling over his virtues to herself, she made a resolve more creditable to head and heart than any other I have had the satisfaction of recording. She would tell him everything. He surely had the right to hear the counts of the indictment before he was sentenced.

The sigh of relief that greeted him on his return marked the upheaval of a great load. She was happier already at the prospect of a clearing-up talk.

He hovered about her and the breakfast table in a joyous bustle that would have annoyed her in another mood. One silver hot-water dish was brought up with much ceremony when fruit and porridge were removed, and set before Mr. Morgan. Lifting the cover with a flourish, he revealed six fine brook-trout done to a turn.

Clara exclaimed with admiration.

"And trout are my favorite fish! What beauties! How did you get them?"

Emmett helped her beamingly and bountifully.

"I told Karen that she could not have devised a greater treat! Do you recollect the trout we ate together in England? I wasn't likely to forget what fish you like best. A fishing-party came in from 'the Snows' last night, and one of them sent a big mess of fish to the Gillettes. Nothing would do when Karen heard that you were out of sorts, but that these must be sent to you, hot-and-hot. What is it, my darling?

Clara had laid down her fork and leaned back in her chair, pale and trembling, her eyes glowing strangely.

"You should have told me — " she began.

A knock at the door severed the agitated sentence. The bolt was drawn before they could speak. Upon the threshold appeared an august figure in travelling costume.

Clara rushed up to her.

"Mamma! oh, mamma!"

Embraces were not in Mrs. James Cameron's line, nor were hysterics and scenes. A mother *must* put her arm around the creature to which she gave birth, when it is clinging to her neck, but the action in this instance did not suit the accompanying word.

"Clara! Clara! compose yourself, child. This is not like you!"

The cold douche had the specific effect.

"I was so startled!" murmured the daughter, abashed as only her mother could abash her. "When did you arrive? And what brought you here? Is anything the matter at home?"

Mrs. Cameron answered one question at a time, and in order, when she had laid off bonnet and mantle. She had come in the morning boat, delayed beyond the usual hour of arrival by rough weather. She was *en route* to attend a Sunday-school convention in Chicago, and meant to spend two days in

Mackinac. All at home were well, or she would not be *here*. A letter advising Clara of her visit should have been received twenty-four hours ago. She had taken a cup of coffee, a slice of toast, and a boiled egg at Mackinac City, and needed no more breakfast. She was not fatigued, having slept well on the cars.

The estimable matron was an iron-gray woman. Her eyes were full, hard, and gray; iron-gray hair was rolled over a firm cushion: a tailor-made gown of sheeny gray stuff was tightened smoothly about an ample bust and waist; her skin was of an opaque grayish tint resembling zinc; her voice was a heroic contralto which "carried" well when she presided over committees and conventions. Looking at her critically, it was difficult to think simultaneously of her husband; absurdly impossible to picture a baby laid upon the marbleized-iron bosom, yet she had borne and brought up six children.

Clara was her first-born and favorite, and had served as a model to her successors in the nursery.

Emmett made a pretence of finishing the interrupted meal, while his wife, whose ap-

petite had failed upon the trout, and Mrs. Cameron, whose modest desires had been met by the single egg, solitary cup of coffee, and one slice of toast, conversed of home and Lisbon affairs. Her son-in-law gulped the last morsel with an effort, rang for a waiter to take away the remnants of the repast he had planned so lovingly, and tried to speak jocosely: —

"I suppose the less you see of me this forenoon, the better," stooping to kiss his wife (Mrs. Cameron looking discreetly in another direction, as she anticipated his action). "I know you have a thousand things to say to one another — so good by until luncheon!"

Mrs. Cameron was too conscientious to catechise her daughter as to her husband's character and conduct. Mrs. Morgan was too loyal a wife to complain of him. Nevertheless, within half an hour after Emmett went lightly down the stairs for a comfortable smoke on the piazza with Mr. Romeyn, the mother knew all the daughter had to tell. Ardently as Clara had longed for this able counsellor, she had had no intention of criminating Emmett.

And yet —

"I see!" observed the mentor, inclusively, when the bulk of the evidence was in. "It seldom happens that the intimates of bachelorhood are such as a man would have his wife know intimately. I regret that your first experience of this truth should be so severe. These people evidently belong to an exaggerated type of the flashy Bohemian — women you should never have *touched!* I am grateful to a kind Providence that brought me here in time to prevent you from complicating the situation by confiding in your husband. Never encounter a man with the story of a beautiful woman's frailty until you have all your proofs ready and docketed. It was not accident that led me to accept the appointment as delegate to this convention. Yet there *are* Christians who disbelieve in special Providences!"

CHAPTER XVI.

"SHE is estima-able, no doubt. She could not be less and have such a charming da-a-ughter — don't you know? Nevertheless, she reminds me of the har-ardware business. Her husband may be a railway stock broker, you know. The ferru-uginous smack may come from the ra-ails, don't you know? And it isn't magnetized iron, either. Or — is it I who am unmagnetic?"

Karen and Bertie strolled up the hill beyond the hotel, and into a winding path running perilously near the verge of the cliff. Mr. Romeyn and Gem followed at a needlessly discreet distance, for Bertie did all the talking, chatter as idle as his saunter. Mrs. Cameron's coming had disturbed the currents of good fellowship in the little party, and this not merely by withdrawing the Morgans from the circle. Mrs. Gillette had had an attack of chilliness last night after an hour's chat with the iron-clad upon

indifferent subjects, and withdrawn early with her daughter from the piazza. The elder lady was still invisible, although Karen reported her as much better when, at ten o'clock, the four fast friends sallied forth upon a ramble.

Karen was quiet beyond her wont. Too sweet-hearted to be morose, and too well-bred to appear abstracted, her entire willingness to leave the talk to her escort had the peculiar effect of augmenting his disfavor toward Mrs. Morgan's parent. By the time they reached the cliff overtopping the Devil's Kitchen, he was berating what he elected to call "the ferruginous fulmination," so virulently that a sparkle of amusement re-lit Karen's eyes.

"Gem!" she called, "our bear is becoming savage. This leader's hand is hardly firm enough. He is used to the whip, you see. And I have not the energy to apply it to-day."

She sat down upon a rock under a sheltering clump of evergreens, and took off her hat with an involuntary sigh. Gem began to scold the recalcitrant, and he to defend himself, Mr. Romeyn acting as amused ref-

cree. Karen looked and felt strangely subdued. She had spoken to her mother a week before of her fancy that there was "thunder in the air." Since then her nerves had been sorely tried, brave as was her outward seeming, and the strain told upon her forces.

Day and scene were tranquilizing. With these familiar friends, there was no need of playing a part. Their affectionate tact — Bertie's feigned discontent and absorption in it being one phase of this — was a wall between her and an exacting public. The loose clasp of her hands upon her knee, the slight droop of her head, the unbent lines of her mouth, indicated pensiveness that was not unpeaceful. Her eyes were following a passing steamer that left upon the still air a corrugated trail, gray-bellied and white-backed, reminding Bertie of a sea-serpent, when the pair of restless young people began the circuitous descent to the water's edge. Gem was sure-footed, Bertie's eye watchful and his arm strong. After nodding a smiling assent to the proposed expedition, the chaperon's gaze recurred to the billowing smoke, broadening as it thinned and arose into the higher air.

The merry voices of the children were faint and remote when she became aware, as if awakening from sleep, that Mr. Romeyn was speaking in his customary subdued key, but with an undertone of earnest feeling that aroused her with the force of an electric shock.

Perhaps because she was singularly devoid of personal vanity, or that security in the thoroughness of their mutual and friendly understanding had made her unobservant, she had never, for a moment, credited what others had hinted more or less broadly, — of the intention of this serious, honorable gentleman to woo her to be his wife. A woman of the world, herself, she appreciated fully the improbability that a wealthy bachelor, nearing forty years of age, and reputed to be indifferent to matrimony, would ever change his condition. She liked and esteemed him, and felt perfectly secure in the permanence of their present relations.

Beyond the start and stir that ran over her figure as his meaning now broke upon her, she gave no sign of emotion, or even attention, for several minutes. Her fingers may have been pressed more closely together, and

the unbent curve of the lips drooped toward sadness. He could not look in the eyes gazing lakeward, and was therefore unprepared for the passion of pleading with which they were abruptly turned upon him.

"I cannot listen!" she said, impetuously. "You must not say it. I never dreamed of this. Your friendship has been a help and a comfort. We will go back to that safe, peaceful haven. Unsay it all, — or better still — both of us will forget it, — my *friend!*"

An irritable suitor could not have suspected her of coquetry. At the real suffering in her face, this one spoke yet more gently.

"I had not hoped for other encouragement than the permission to await your time and will. I am not blind, or yet a coxcomb, and so could not misunderstand your friendliness. I saw that, before you would suspect the real state of my affections, I must speak plainly. Let me go on — please!" for her gesture besought his silence.

"I know that you do not talk for effect, and you have said twice in my hearing — perhaps with a purpose — that you disbelieve in second marriages. I have an excellent memory," smiling slightly, "and I recollect that

when I was a child, my widowed mother said the same thing, and far more emphatically. Yet she married again, and very happily."

She glanced up at the lighter inflection that went with the smile. He stood under a balsam-fir, one hand grasping a low bough, and the other, holding his hat, hung at his side. Courteous, self-contained, manly yet deferential, he appeared to admirable advantage. But tranquil as was his general mien, there was that in his eyes that sent the blood leaping to her temples. She half arose, wringing her hands in an agony of remorseful regret.

"Why did you ever see me? Why did I break my resolution of seclusion from a world in which I have no right to appear? Mr. Romeyn! dear, noble friend!" hurrying out the words, while her slender fingers punished one another cruelly, and her eyes, dark and troubled, looked away from him to the placid waters. "I must not let you say one word more. I am not a widow, except in heart. *That* I shall be forever! Oh! my God! forever! *forever!*"

She sank back upon the mossy rock and buried her face in her hands. As the man

— the flush of angry astonishment fading slowly away — stood rooted to the earth, he saw tears trickle over her wrists and fall in her lap.

"I am answered," he said in a voice that, if hard, was not bitter. "Is it necessary to say that, had I known the truth — "

"You would not have spoken!" throwing down her hands and revealing the wet eyes and trembling mouth. "No! no! no! I know your nice sense of right and honor. But, were it possible for me to love you, — or any man again, — I would not entangle your prosperous life with mine — such a frayed and befouled thread!"

He took a step toward her.

"Take back those last words! I demand this in justice to yourself. Thirty-eight years have taught me something of women. God's angels, who hear us, are not purer than you! I swear it!"

She arose and held out both hands — solemn lustre shining through her tears.

"You are a good man!" she said, with simple fervor. "Thank you, for believing in my mother's daughter. We — she and I — must leave this place soon — very soon.

There is a strange heaviness upon my heart of late. It may be the shadow of coming disaster. It may have meant only this. *It* is sad enough, Heaven knows! Wherever I go, I shall remember you, and that you held me to be worthy of your regard. See! Bertie and Gem have reached the shore, and are trying to attract our attention!"

She shook her handkerchief; Mr. Romeyn waved his hat in reply to the united halloo that ran up the rocky face of the precipice.

The sun was in the meridian when the cliff-climbers, returning, beheld Mrs. Dumaresque seated under one tree, almost hidden by the *New York Tribune*. Mr. Romeyn, under another, was deep in the editorial columns of one of a pile of journals, topped by the *Interior* and *Chicago Tribune*.

"Well, runaways!" said the chaperon, in playful severity. "We were wondering if you were making the round of the Island. Mr. Romeyn has had time to go back to the hotel for the morning papers, and we have read six apiece. Did you find any more irreverent bits of pasteboard in his Satanic Majesty's plate-warmer?"

CHAPTER XVII.

Mrs. Cameron arose on Wednesday full of affairs and pious resolve. She buttoned her wrinkleless, tailor-made gown over a bust heaving strongly, but regularly, with matured intentions. Her face was zinc-white and determined: her falcon eye said that the way was clear for her fearless feet. The angels had swept aside every pebble of doubt, dug up every shard of mistaken pity for the sinner whose day of doom had dawned. Mrs. Cameron had a just appreciation of her own talents, and knew herself to be equal to any emergency, — with the connivance and help of Providence, of course.

She ate no meat for breakfast that morning; and while discussing her fruit, porridge, graham bread, and coffee, took occasion to observe that "persons of full habit would do well to confine themselves to vegetarian diet when there was any matter on hand which required intellectual effort and nerve-power"

"I suppose your mother has a paper to prepare for the Chicago Convention," Emmett said when Clara proposed a *tête-à-tête* drive, — "mamma having another engagement for the forenoon."

She colored and bridled slightly.

"Mamma is always active in good works."

"Nobody can deny that, my love," rejoined the generous son-in-law. "She is a woman of marvellous executive ability."

He would have conceded much more in the relief of escaping for a couple of hours from the majestic muchness of her presence. Reports of the meetings, moderated by the inimitable executive officer, invariably spoke of her "fine presence." It was upon her in force, encased body and soul, as in triple mail, as, standing at the window of her chamber, she beheld the party of four set out upon their cliff-side ramble. Her agate-iron eye surveyed Karen with the gleam a hunter flashes along his gun-barrel when drawing a bead upon his game, but her calm lips were unstirred. Then she betook herself, netting in hand, to Mrs. Manly's parlor.

The invalid's sofa was drawn into the

middle of the room, facing the western windows, the blinds of which were open.

"I was watching my young people go over the hill," she said, vivaciously. "I notified them that I should, and they turned to wave me a salute from the highest point. They never forget the stranded hulk and her whims. What I shall do to console and interest Gem when Mrs. Dumaresque goes away, I shudder to think. She is a genius in chaperonage as in everything else."

Mrs. Cameron's netting was macramé lace, made of hempen thread as gray and as uncompromising as herself. She drew cord and lips tight before she replied: —

"You admire that sort of person, then?"

Mrs. Manly was hurt and stunned by the moral brickbat.

"Person! My dear Jane! Who does not admire and love Mrs. Dumaresque? Put the question to anybody who knows her! Refer it to the whole hotel!"

"She *is* showy, I grant, with a sort of meretricious beauty that catches the uneducated taste. Actress by nature and practice, she is never off guard, and courts universal approbation. It is quite the safest course *in the circumstances*."

Her quick ear catching what she thought was a muffled rustle in the bed-room, the door of which was ajar, she interrupted herself to ask, "Is there danger that we will be overheard?"

"No. That is, unless — Fanny!"

There was no response to the call; but Mrs. Cameron took nothing for granted. She arose, pushed the door wide open, and scanned the inner apartment. There was nobody there, yet she made all safe by shutting the door of communication.

Mrs. Manly thrust down the shoulder-robe from her fluttering lungs and fanned herself pantingly.

"My dear cousin! What do you mean to insinuate? Don't keep me in suspense! Suspense is the worst possible thing for one in my condition." She reached over to the table for her smelling-salts, pulled out the stopper, and inhaled the volatile contents between breaths. "Not that you could possibly know anything against a woman you never met or heard of until last night!"

"I know everything about her — and nothing in her favor." Mrs. Cameron undid a kink in the stiff thread with keen, broad

finger-nails. "In the first place, she passes under an assumed name, — a trick as clever as any she has practised, which is saying much. Retaining the spelling, she has altered the pronunciation. She was Mrs. De*mar*ack when she lived in a frontier garrison with her lawful husband, and in outward respectability. She is Mrs. Duma*resque* since she ran away from him with another man, and is queening it in Northern watering-places, her dutiful mother, with a saintly face and a reputation for wealth and social standing, ready to whitewash the wanton daughter."

"Great Heavens!" Mrs. Manly dropped the vinaigrette. The stopper rolled into the middle of the floor. Mrs. Cameron picked it up, fitted it into the bottle, and laid the latter upon the stand.

"Am I dreaming?" cried the shocked hostess, chokingly. "Are you sane? What horrible misunderstanding is this? I will not — I cannot — I *ought* not to credit one word of it! You have been grossly misinformed. You are talking of a different person than my Gem's best friend. Think of my child, Jane Cameron!"

"Think of *my* child, Jemima Manly! Exposed at the outset of her married life to the almost certain chance that the fact of this apparently intimate intercourse with a disreputable woman will reflect upon her all her days! And, but for my providential arrival, this might have gone on until the mischief was irretrievable. This creature's husband was here last week. You saw him. He mingled freely with the company in this hotel. He has changed *his* name, too — it is said, to take that of an uncle who left him his heir. It is more likely that he wanted to get rid of the name the wicked woman has disgraced. Captain Dale introduced him to you as Major Kane."

"Jane Cameron! NO!" rising on her elbow.

"Jemima Manly! YES!" continuing to tie meshes of the hempen web. "He came to entreat her to consent to a divorce, that she might be made an honest woman in the eyes of the world by marrying the partner of her crime. She flouted the idea. She jeered at him and mocked him on that very piazza, within arm's length of your window. Do you recollect the night of the thunder-storm, when

you were ill with headache, and Clara sat in here while you were asleep? She *saw* the husband and wife, and heard all I have told you."

"Merciful powers!" Mrs. Manly's defences were ground to powder by this last and realistic proof. "Whom can I trust? Oh, let me hope there is some mistake — somewhere! I think to believe it all would kill me!"

If she were a geyser of tears and declamation, her kinswoman was a dry Gibraltar.

"To believe it should nerve you to save your child, and to atone to society, in some measure, for the harm you have done by misplaced confidence in an adventuress. Prompt action is imperatively required of us all. I ask you to believe nothing without conclusive evidence. Compose yourself sufficiently to listen, and you shall judge for yourself."

She welded the links of Clara's discoveries and suspicions into a chain that rivalled in massive might Lord Stirling's celebrated boom stretched across the Hudson. No "castings" for her! Nothing but wrought-iron, and plenty of it, served her turn. No

wonder honest Bertie detected the "ferruginous smack"!

It may have been half an hour thereafter that a prominent member of the august Chief Butler's staff, dubbed by that official "My Assistants,"—a spruce, supercilious mulatto,—passed the door of Mrs. Manly's bed-room just as a young woman of like complexion and jauntiness with himself stole forth on tiptoe. His exclamation of pleasurable surprise was checked by an imperious gesture.

"I was on my way to get a mossle of fresh air," she said, mincingly, when they were a few steps further up the corridor.

"May I be your escort?" divining her intent.

Had the cousins glanced at the open window, they could have seen the pair ascending the hill, deep in talk. It was the Assistant's "morning off," and Fanny could depend upon her mistress's indulgence should the bell be rung vainly during her absence. The trim Abigail was a treasure. She had lived with Mrs. Manly and the Idiosynerasy for five years, and knew her place too well to emerge from the closet where she was arranging Mrs. Manly's

trunk, after overhearing Mrs. Cameron's insulting query. Had she been tempted to answer her employer's call, the other matron settled the matter by scrutinizing the inner room. It was the action of a spy, not of a lady, decided handsome Fanny, holding her breath in wholesome indignation until the meanness of the transaction was climaxed by the sound of the closing door. With the practical appreciation of the specific purpose of the keyhole, innate in her class and profession, she so far gratified her love of a flavorous dish of scandal that the story she poured into the willing ears of her admirer owed less to her imagination than might have been expected from Mrs. Manly's confidential maid.

The smouldering eyes of the dusky dandy kindled with the unfolding tale. The air of nonchalant superiority habitual to him while on duty in the *salle-à-manger* occasionally verged so nearly upon insolence, that Mrs. Dumaresque had overlooked him pointedly one day, when it was necessary to make an inquiry of an official, by "preferring to wait until the head-waiter should come in." The snub was as courteous as snub could be, but

the mean mind never forgave it. He questioned eagerly, and his Dulcinea answered at length; the day was glorious, and their consciences were free from haunting thoughts of tasks undone; they wandered on and on, with the panther-like tread inherited from a savage ancestry, the brown carpet of the woodland path soundless under their feet, until Fanny drew back suddenly, with a low exclamation: —

"Lordy! looky thar!"

Another step would have cleared the clump of undergrowth behind which they watched the tableau set upon the cliff-brow, each line startlingly strong against the peerless blue of the island sky.

Karen, seated upon a stone, hands interlocked upon her knee, the sunshine falling like a blessing upon her bared head, looked far out to the water-gates on the dim horizon. Mr. Romeyn stood a little space away, and was speaking earnestly.

The spies were too far off to catch a single word of the dialogue, but not a gesture escaped their greedy eyes until, alarmed by the abrupt motion with which Karen arose to hold out her hands to her suitor, they sped noiselessly back by the winding path.

"They ain't comin' yet!" panted Fanny, stopping to lean against a tree on one side, and the Assistant's shoulder upon the other. "We was scared for nothin'. I wisht we had a-stayed longer. She were jes' about to jump inter his arms. — shouldn't you say so?"

"They always do, my dear!" said the expert, sagely. "But I say, ain't *she* a high one?"

In the race between good and evil tidings, the former is not only handicapped, but spavined. The whole Church, militant and triumphant, needs to cry continually, "Fly! fly! thou mighty Gospel!"

Scandal requires neither whip nor spur.

By the time Mrs. Gillette and her daughter alighted at the main entrance of the hotel after their afternoon drive, a hundred pairs of eyes were ready to gloat upon or menace them. It was noticed by not a few that Mr. Romeyn had not been seen since luncheon time, which meal he had taken, as usual, at the table with the Gillettes. Almost immediately after the ladies had gone to their rooms, he had emerged from the rotunda, looking pale and grave. One woman of inflammable fancy repeated to all who were not too busy

tattling on the same string to hearken to her, how she had remarked to her sister: "That man has had a blow! I shouldn't wonder if the mail had brought him bad news!"—although THE STORY had not then reached her ears.

Another woman—a late arrival—had inquired, "Who is that saturnine individual who is mounting that fine horse?"

Mrs. Jo-McCarthy-Seth-Liggon had stepped at once into popularity that turned that moiety of her brain which up to now had retained an ounce or two of ballast. She held court at every breathing-place by virtue of her whilom intimacy with that "magnificent, poor, dear Lootenant Demarick," and the acumen that had penetrated the disguise the designing creature had carried off so shamelessly.

Mr. Romeyn, then, had *thrown himself* into his saddle (all the stories agreed as to the action) and galloped off toward the woods. He had not been seen since. Mrs. Liggon was the only one who openly broached the suspicion of suicide; but others had thrills of awful deliciousness in silently revolving the probabilities that out of first-class "sha-

diness" might be evolved high tragedy. The desire to be upon the ground when he returned, or when news of IT should be brought, was second only to the curiosity to take another stare at the dethroned queen, when word ran along the lines that her carriage was in sight.

She walked up the broad flight of steps with the mien of a reigning sovereign: more slowly than usual, because her mother leaned upon her, but she carried her head high; her lineaments were serene: her glance was free and clear. Mother and daughter were within two steps of the top when Mr. Wilkes lumbered out of the door, hastened down to them, and lent his aid toward bringing Mrs. Gillette into the desired haven, by grasping her elbow and making an upward "haul."

The courteous crowd tittered: Karen's smile was grateful.

"Thank you!" said her soft yet vibrant tones. "My mother is rather more tired than would seem excusable in any one upon this lovely afternoon. I hope Mrs. Wilkes and the young ladies are enjoying the sunset?"

Turning for a last look at it, she was in the

full stream of warm, rich light palpitating from the burning west, yet a shiver ran over her — so people averred afterward — as if a frosty breeze had struck her.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE day begun so happily by Gem was drawing to a dreary close. The programme decided upon by the pair of pious plotters — each in her individual way a sensationalist — included hoodwinking, up to a given point, the girl who would inevitably hasten the bursting of the bomb by her passionate partisanship of the criminal.

Mrs. Manly could not meet her child's ingenuous eyes, nor hear her prattle praise of her friend, and successfully dissemble her indignation. She had but one resort. The talons of the Idiosyncrasy dragged her from her couch of ease to her bed in the darkened inner apartment.

The odor of ether stealing through the transom of the parlor revealed the situation to Gem before she entered. A whispered exclamation of dismay broke from her.

"Mamma is ill! And she seemed so bright this morning!"

"I will not come in, then!" said Karen, as softly. "But I will wait here to know how she is!"

"Very bad!" was Gem's report. "She hardly knew me — she is so stupefied by that dreadful drug! Fanny is used to giving it, but I am always frightened."

She was a fond and faithful daughter, and, except to take a hasty luncheon, did not stir from the sitting-room all the afternoon. By four o'clock, Fanny emerged from the inner chamber to announce, *sotto voce*, that "It was passing off." By five, a feeble voice called for Gem.

Mrs. Manly's complexion was sanguine, and her spirits were on the gentle rise. She patted her daughter's cheek, and promised to be "all right soon."

"I feel as if natural slumber would visit me now, my darling," she added, in firmer tones. "Would you mind sitting in the other room with your book, while poor Fanny gets an hour's rest? She is quite fagged out, and no wonder!"

Unsuspicious Gem ensconced herself dutifully by her favorite window, a volume Karen had lent her in her hand, and for the

next hour and a half divided her attention between the pages and the gay scene without, her ear all the while alert for sounds from the convalescent's room.

Natural slumber proved propitious, and prolonged her stay. The tide of vehicles, riders, and pedestrians up and down the hill capped by Cliff Cottage was ebbing by reason of the nearing dinner hour, when, between her bowed shutters, the girl saw Bertie saunter around the bend of the road, and come toward the hotel in company with four other young fellows. About a dozen yards above the piazza they paused, apparently to watch an approaching excursion steamer.

"How becoming white is to that boy!" thought our little maiden, in the matronly strain feminine nineteen indulges in toward masculine three-and-twenty.

Bertie's white flannel tennis-suit was fresh and fashionable. His snowy cap sat the blonde curls jauntily; his racket was in his left hand, and he strummed upon the netting with his right, as upon a mandolin, while he talked; a cigar was between his lips. He was graceful, indolent, and happy, the embodiment of midsummer content.

"He is growing handsome. Or is it because I know him better?" mused Gem, in the same affectionately patronizing mood. "I used to think him an affected boy—"

The boy had turned sharply, even fiercely, upon one of the group, whose sneering laugh Gem could see and hear. They were so near that she saw the sun-bronzed face she was commending change pallidly, his eyes gleam blue lightning. He took his cigar from his lips; there was a breathless exchange of question and reply; the racket was dropped; Bertie took a step forward; a blow straight from the shoulder, like the leap of a sword-cane, full upon the sneering mouth, sent his interlocutor reeling to the ground. Before his comrades could interfere, Bertie kicked the prostrate figure over and over, as he might an empty barrel, until he lodged in the evergreens barring the edge of the bank from the highway.

Wheeling upon the astonished trio of spectators, his visage livid with passion, the "boy" seemed to interrogate them, his eyes flaming from face to face. Getting prompt and, it would seem, humble answers, Bertie smiled grimly, as Gem had never imagined he could look, turned on his heel, and walked rapidly

into the central corridor of the hotel, binding up his bleeding hand with his handkerchief.

In passing the Manlys' window, he glanced darkly toward it, but saw no one. Gem had fallen back in her chair, shocked almost to swooning.

"I never knew lambs could bark and *bite!*" she half sobbed, half laughed, in recovering her senses.

She was thrilling and quaking from head to foot. Terror at being the eye-witness of a real fight that drew blood on both sides: pride in the cherub's mastery of a noble art she had not credited him with possessing, and in his prowess in extinguishing in ten seconds a man several inches taller and many pounds heavier than himself: and, surmounting both these emotions, something keener and sweeter than either, novel, and non-analyzable by her experience, dominated and frightened her. She was really afraid of the doughty youth. She inwardly catalogued the glance he had cast at the window as "fell," and tried to speculate upon the probabilities that he had an ungovernable temper, yet had never liked him one-tenth so well before.

At seven o'clock the Gillettes descended

the staircase, the mother resting upon the daughter's arm. The pretty old lady moved more slowly than she had a week before: her skin was like ivory which is beginning to show age; now and then her lips faded into blue-white, that startled the lookers-on. If Karen noted the change, she held her peace, and no shade of solicitude dimmed the affectionate smile with which she talked now to her parent, ignoring the shortness of breath that obliged them to halt for a second upon the lowest landing. As they turned toward the dining-room, Amy and Grace Wilkes met them, the younger sister with a cluster of sweet-brier buds and blossoms, which she held blushingly up to Mrs. Dumaresque.

"They came from our bush!" said the child, timidly.

"Thank you, dear!" caressing the brown curls. "Sweet-brier will always, after this summer, remind me of you."

The four walked together to the door of the dining-room. Mr. Romeyn and Bertie, entering the rotunda from another side, hastened to overtake them and accompany Mrs. Gillette and her daughter to their seats. The sisters, from the table occupied by them-

selves and their parents, saw indignantly what the Gillettes did not remark, — the stares, furtive, curious, and insolent, directed toward the quartette. Their modest station at the side of the great hall was the focal point of all eyes. Even the waiters lingered to look at them in passing hither and yon. Two or three, who affected the supercilious Assistant's manner, rather than the superb suavity of their principal, nudged one another grimmingly. The most fashionable dames present, with solitaire earrings like headlights for gleam, and imported slaughter of native accent upon their mouths, pointed out "the latest sensation," and "our budding scandal, me dear," to new-comers.

The objects of all this observation chatted as easily and smiled as pleasantly as was their wont, bestowing even less attention than usual upon the babbling, clinking, and clacking world about them.

"*That* is what I call perfect breeding!" said Mrs. Wilkes aside to her husband. "*Can* she be as unconscious as she appears?"

"She has eyes, and more wits than all the confounded crew put together!" growled the storekeeper and prospective legislator. "It's

clear grit! — that's what it is — and woman's grit, at that! — the best article of the kind in the market; warranted a fit, every time! But I'd give a year's profits and my best Jersey cow to have her clean out of this, and eating shortcake and raspberries with us at home this very minute! I'm sick of hotel cooking and hotel ways!"

"An accident upon the tennis-court, or in boating?" queried Mrs. Gillette, noticing the court-plaster upon Bertie's hand.

"I skinned it against a nosty blo-o-ke, don't you know?" the Anglican smack successfully disguising the slang phrase. The cherubic eyed his marred knuckles in rueful admiration, funny enough in itself. "Lost me temper and hurt me to-o-e, kicking the be-eastly thing into the lake, don't you know?"

"Poor block!" said Karen. "Let us hope it could swim!"

But she had intercepted a warning glance from his quondam guardian, and on their way out after dinner, accosted Mr. Romeyn in a mirthful undertone: —

"What has the absurd boy been doing?"

"His *duty!*" savagely. "I beg your par-

don!" as she looked quickly at him. "Bertie is a famous boxer, and a fellow, whom Bertie would style 'a cad,' not knowing his gifts in that line, tried to take advantage of his deficiency in the matter of weight and height — and got left. That is the tale in brief."

"Bertie is as brave as he is sweet," said Karen, thoughtfully, "and a true-hearted, leal friend."

"You are right."

The response was so grave that she returned from her troubled wonder as to whether Gem might possibly be mixed up in the fracas. Something in the set, colorless face, looking sternly forward, brought the blood from her heart to her cheeks, — the impotent pain pure women with sensitive consciences, who have inspired love they cannot return, know so well. The hurt she had dealt that forenoon was deep, and she could offer not so much as a drop of balm. But for the preoccupation of this reflection, she must have become the sooner aware of the stir of something strange and adverse beneath the surface of the social waters. As the four, Bertie and Mrs. Gillette leading the way, strolled

up the piazza, the crowd parted conspicuously to the left and right, yet nobody seemed conscious of their neighborhood. Promenaders looked fixedly at each other, and talked faster, or espied something of absorbing interest far out upon the lake, or fell into moody abstraction that drew the eyes to the floor or into vacancy. It could hardly have been by chance that not one of many acquaintances met the mother and daughter in the long, deliberate progress to the upper curve, where the twain had held court, evening after evening, for a month past. There the Wilkses in a body were grouped, with over-studied carelessness, around the easy-chair set ready for the old lady.

Her breath was uncertain and unequal in thanking them for the courtesy; her smile was a flickering ray.

"Pray Heaven she may not guess what is going on!" Mrs. Wilkes found opportunity to breathe into her helpmate's ear. "She hasn't the strength for it."

Then the worthy souls began to make such diligent talk that the rest of the little party were drawn in, and those who stood and sat aloof, but attent, remarked how shamelessly the convicted Creature was "carrying on with those men."

Alas! those who were near were few; those who held themselves apart, many. Besides Mr. Romeyn, Bertie, and the Wilkes family, no one approached her who was but yesterday a queen. People turned in the promenade at the swell of the curve of the noble portico, with the precision of sentinels upon their beat. The few who were caught above the infected district beat a retreat to the corridor bisecting the wing, and through it made their way to safer regions. "The awful circle of the *banned*" was drawn as distinctly about the central group as though defined by governmental edict.

Until, to the amusement of the men and the horror of the women, Emmett Morgan, who had taken an afternoon off, his wife having her mother's society, and spent it in playing chess upon the Dales' porch, and to whom no one dared whisper a syllable of recent disclosures, appeared at the upper end of the piazza, accompanied by Captain and Mrs. Dale, and the three attached themselves forthwith to the party under fire. Mrs. Dale accepted smilingly the chair offered by Mr. Romeyn: the Captain bent low over Mrs. Gillette's hand, and then remained standing

by her; and luckless Emmett, resting a hand on the back of Karen's chair, leaned toward her ear to retail an amusing story Mrs. Dale had just told him. The sensation produced by this manifestation of culpable ignorance or astounding effrontery on the part of the young Benedict was so palpable, that Karen, raising her beautiful eyes, sparkling with laughter excited by the anecdote, heard the rustle and murmur. Her startled look, as it swept the scores of faces turned upon them, all bearing varieties in degree of one sentiment, caused Emmett to follow it. Reviewing the scene in a calm moment, he could compare the shock to nothing but the agony of a mote that accidentally crosses the focus of a solar microscope. He and his friends were suddenly ranged upon a stage in the merciless blaze of light that scorched while it blinded. Everybody was staring at them. In the excitement of the instant, people had turned their chairs to get a better look; strollers looked over their shoulders; men leaned against pillars and surveyed them coolly; women even lifted eyeglasses in reckless impertinence.

Thus for one blinding second — then the

throng broke into sections and into knots that resumed idle or serious chat. But it was a second he never forgot. The next, he shifted his position, instinctively, to shield the pale face of his companion from cruel scrutiny. Her eyes were distraught with asking and misgiving — appeal that recalled, as in a flash of light, what they had said to him on the afternoon of his arrival at Mackinac, when they looked up at him standing with his bride upon the balcony — the instant in which he recognized in the brilliant brunette of the tableau below his old acquaintance.

"In Heaven's name!" she uttered, low and huskily, "what does it mean? What have I done?"

"Nothing! nothing! hush!"

For around the corner of the building tripped Mrs. Manly's maid, smart and smirking, with a note in her hand.

It was for Mrs. Dumaresque. Opening it mechanically, she glanced down the page, and, as if still dazed, passed it to Emmett.

"Shall I read it aloud?" he inquired, when he had run it over.

"If you please."

It was in Gem's handwriting: —

"DEAREST MRS. DUMARESQUE: (This is not I who write. It is Mamma.) She has been ill all day, but finds herself so much better to-night — in fact, so well — that she begs for the pleasure of your society, 'and would you have the infinite complaisance' (this is still Mamma who speaks!) to recite 'Lasca' for us this once more? Mrs. Cameron is extremely anxious to hear it, as rendered by you. Bring Mr. Romeyn, Mr. Gates, —"

The witch had written "*the Ubiquities,*" then crossed it out, —

"the Dales, Wilkses, — in short, all your court, with you, most gracious Lady and Queen (that's a touch of Mamma again!), and make golden one leaden hour of an invalid's dreary day.

"So prays Mamma. To which petition I, Gem, who love you, add 'Amen!'

"P.S. I wanted to go for you in my own person, which is never 'proper,' but Mamma thought this formal (!) request would be in better taste for suppliants."

There was a second postscript, which Emmett did not read aloud: —

"*Come*, my darling — won't you? I have not seen you for eight and a half hours, and I am withering!

"Lovingly,
"GEM."

Mrs. Gillette arose with the rest when a

motion was made in the direction of Mrs. Manly's apartment.

Something in her lack of alertness caught her daughter's eye. She was at her side in a moment, forgetful of her own perplexity.

"Mamma! are you not well? Would you like to go to your room instead?"

"Do!" urged Mrs. Wilkes. "I will stay with you while the young people are listening to the recitation."

The fine old figure was straightened; a lovely bloom tinted the faded face.

"Fie! fie! You must not make me out to be superannuated. I shall never be past liking to see young people happy, or enjoying my daughter's triumphs. I shall be well rated for that last word when I do suffer myself to be taken up stairs. So it behooves me to stay below as long as I can."

Before Emmett could offer his arm, Mr. Romeyn's was extended and accepted. Karen fell back, undesignedly, to Bertie's side, and perceived how it had happened, as he spoke under his breath.

"I say, if you don't want to keep that 'skit,'—designating the note she was twisting abstractedly between her fingers,—"I am

partially acquainted with a fellow who would l-i-i-k-e to lay it away among his mementoes, you know."

His whimsicalities always amused her. The low, musical laugh that answered him was like a girl's, but Mr. Romeyn's forehead was lined, as with sudden pain, in hearing it.

"What if your 'fellow' should not value it when you are better acquainted with him?" she rejoined, banteringly.

Nevertheless, the little billet rustled into his left breast pocket as they entered Mrs. Manly's parlor.

CHAPTER XIX.

Cleopatra lay in high state among silken cushions of many colors. An India shawl of fabulous value in the days when only rich people wore such was flung across her feet. A generous sluice of cold air had dispelled the fumes of ether, and the breath of a big boxful of violets, with which Bertie Gates had paid a philopena forfeit to Gem, was banishing the memory of the drug.

In the midst of her wrath, which was deep, and her useless regrets, which were sincere, the straining after dramatic effect, which had become second nature with Mrs. Manly, was visible in every appointment for the scene of the evening. The stage was dressed for a *dénouement* which was to be historical. From her couch, she commanded the semi-circle of chairs which was artistically irregular. Her gown was pale lavender, trimmed with black lace; Gem's, of white China silk, was girdled with lavender that shaded harmoniously with

her mother's robe. The light was stronger than either of them liked to have it at these informal receptions. Mrs. Cameron asked that the silken shade which generally tempered the glare might be dispensed with to-night. She needed clear light for her netting.

The exemplary matron was drawn up in force upon a high-backed chair at her cousin's right hand. A trail of hempen meshes lay across her lap; her strong fingers manipulated and conquered the stout threads in a relentless fashion, that suggested her probable method of handling heart-strings. Her face was as calm as the Jungfrau on a clear January morning. Before coming to the tribunal where she was to act as prosecutor, witness, and judge, she had locked her door, and, upon knees well used to the posture, asked the blessing of righteous Heaven upon the task laid to her hand.

Her equanimity acted like bromide-and-lavender upon Mrs. Manly's nerves, and awed Clara. At sight of it the latter felt ashamed of the unladylike heat with which she had regarded her husband's truancy, and the actual hatred that had fluttered her pulses at thought of Karen Dumaresque. Would

she ever be able to emulate the marble-like composure of the eminent Christian philanthropist? She, too, had her work. The dozenth faint buff doyly was to be a memento forever to her of this eventful occasion. As she plied the needle with cold, humid fingers, she stitched into the intricate design of interlocking and infinitely be-spoked wheels suspenseful trepidation she dared not betray in her mother's presence.

Light-hearted, light-footed Gem flitted about the room, pulling a fold straight here, settling a flower there, picking up with the tongs a fallen coal; adjusting her mother's screen, and breaking into intermittent murmurs of song, until Mrs. Manly remarked plaintively upon her "fidgetiness."

"Forgive me!" pleaded the child, stooping to kiss the petulant lips. "I don't know what ails me to-night. I feel as if something *awfully*, transcendently delicious were just about to happen. I suppose it is because you are so much better, Mamma dear, and that we are to have another Dumaresque evening. *That* is enough to set my pulses to dancing."

Not a word replied. Mrs. Manly closed

her eyes and fanned herself nervously. Mrs. Morgan's head bent lower over her work; there was as much expression in Mrs. Cameron's face as in a new grayish slate. Fanny, who had never been more handy, discreet, and demure than while arraying her mistress and setting the room in order for "company," had her own flurry of spirits, but it was not a formless mystery of expectation. When she retired from the scene of action at Mrs. Manly's gracious bidding, it was not as that lady suggested, to "have a holiday evening with the other maids."

"Lock the bed-room door on the inside, Fanny, and go out this way," was also an order susceptible of ingenious construction. The door was locked, but the key went off in Fanny's pocket. She had not studied stage-tricks under Mrs. Manly for four years in vain.

Voices and steps in the corridor heralded the party for whom preparation had been made. Gem flew to the door before the leader of the band could knock.

They entered with a playful show of processional parade. Mrs. Gillette and Mr. Romeyn were first; Karen came, last of all, upon elate Bertie's arm. Mrs. Cameron and

her daughter bowed; the hostess saluted effusively with her fan. There was a tumult, merry but subdued, in consideration of the invalid's recent indisposition, in seating the company. The room was quite full when all were settled. Mrs. Gillette had the arm-chair of honor. Bertie dropped upon the rug at her feet. Emmett, following his example, drew up a foot-cushion in front of his wife, and bestowing himself thereupon, rested his elbow upon her knee.

Clara blushed brightly at the action. She knew that Mamma thought it indecorous; yet had her life or the preservation of Mamma's favor depended upon it, she could not have repelled the dear, affectionate fellow. Her heart, hungry and sore, responded with an eager bound to the public demonstration of love and preference. After all, he *did* belong to her, and vaunted the truth.

Mrs. Cameron, better versed in masculine deceits, drew her thread hard and narrowed the line of her tight lips. The sugar-plum of uxorious display on the part of a faithless spouse was a stale trick. She had seen, through a convenient crevice of the front shutters, what Clara had not — Emmett's

attitude of tender homage not three minutes before the receipt of Mrs. Manly's note; had witnessed, too, Karen's transfer of it to him for the public reading.

"As an honest woman might pass over her private letters to her husband!" thought the virtuous matron.

The pleasant ripple of chat was arrested presently by Mrs. Manly's somewhat awkward introduction of the pretext of her invitation. Karen came gracefully to her relief as she bungled volubly and halted senselessly. The atmosphere of the familiar room, the environment of friends, the exclusion of the outer line of curious and insolent faces, wrought peaceful gratitude within her soul. *Here* she was safe! When Gem had fluttered to her side, and stolen an arm about her, she could have clasped the child to her heart and broken into wild weeping, so great was the revulsion of feeling. The lustre of unshed tears was yet upon her eyes, a moved smile on her lips, as she arose for the recitation she had assured Mrs. Manly "it was a pleasure, not a trouble, to give."

"We wouldn't press you to repeat it,—only Mrs. Cameron would like—in fact, is

just burning with desire — to hear you in this, your masterpiece," the kinswoman declared.

The zinc woman testified her flaming desire by folding the hempen lace and laying it upon the table; then overlapping the strong hands, that could look cruel, upon her gray poplin gown, and fastening her unwinking eyes upon the high-bred, sensitive face of the speaker.

The deadening grayness of Mrs. Cameron's complexion, and the dilation of her eyes, as the tale proceeded, were something to behold and never to forget. Up to this she had felt that the Creature defied her, with other spotless women, in flaunting the garb of respectability. Now, she and they, in the concrete, Virtue, in the abstract — and Providence, of course — were insulted openly. The story of lawless love, reckless passion, attempted homicide — and Heaven only knows what other monstrous implications — was recited for *her* pleasure — at *her* request! The selection was Mrs. Manly's. Mrs. Cameron never read poetry or novels. But who was to know that? The First Directress of the Ladies' Aid Association of the Lisbon Church, the prospective lecturer of the Chicago Sunday-school

Convention, stood committed to an ungovernable desire to hear 'Lasca!'

"A poem of Western life and adventure," her cousin had said. "Just the thing to furnish an excellent opening for your catechism."

Bertie tingled all over with malicious glee at seeing the stiffening eyeballs roll portentously from Clara to Mrs. Manly, resting, *en route*, rebukefully, upon the unconscious son-in-law, who saw only Karen's speaking face, as she gave the lines: —

> "But once, when I made her jealous for fun,
> At something I'd whispered, or looked, or done,
> One Sunday, in San Antonio,
> To a glorious girl on the Alamo, —
> She drew from her garter a dear little dagger,
> And — sting of a wasp! it made me stagger!
> An inch to the left, or an inch to the right,
> And I shouldn't be maundering here to-night.
> But she sobbed, and sobbing, so swiftly bound
> Her torn reboso about the wound,
> That I quite forgave her. Scratches don't count
> In Texas, down by the Rio Grande."

The gray woman's — by now — bloodless lips actually parted when the garter was named, as a fish comes up to the top of the water for air. They stirred again at the "torn reboso."

The unknown garment might be — probably it was — a petticoat!

The recitation over, the granitic auditor continued to regard the smiling sinner with hard, wide eyes, until the bulging gaze drew the notice of others. An odd pause and constraint passed upon the group. Mrs. Cameron cleared her throat. Clara's very feet became ice at the sound: her heart rolled over slowly, then lay still for one awful second.

"May I ask, Mrs. — *ahem!* — Dumaresque, if you know anything personally of frontier life, — not, of course, of such a disreputable career as that described in your favorite poem, — but of army and garrison life?"

"Yes," said Karen, tranquilly, "I lived in garrison on the frontier for some years, and made long journeys with the regiment over the plains."

"In company with your husband, Lieutenant — afterward Captain — De-*mar*-ack, I presume?"

Karen's great dark eyes looked right at her: her countenance was immovable.

"With my husband, as you say. I went out to a garrison immediately upon my marriage."

"What were some of the forts in which you lived?"

The answer was prompt and composed.

"Fort Wingate, Fort Lincoln, Vancouver Barracks, and others. If you are interested in army life and army men, Mrs. Cameron, Captain Dale can tell you more than I of forts and fort people."

The resolute stare was not diverted by the reference.

"May I inquire at which station you changed the pronunciation of your name, and why?"

Response came from an unlooked-for quarter. It was Mrs. Gillette's voice, steady and sweet, that took up the word.

"It was at my earnest request, after she returned to my home. Nothing in the English language justifies the eccentricity of De-*mar*-ack. There is even less warrant in the original French. It is never too late to right a wrong thing."

"The drollest trick of pronunciation I ever ha-appened upon was in the ca-ase of the na-ame of a little cross-ro-oads settlement in the neighborhood of Richmond, Virginia," drawled Bertie, so lazily one might have

thought him drowsy, and bored to boot. "The na-atives call it '*Da-a-rby*.' I'll allow a-any of you ten guesses in which to fi-ind out how it is spelled, and give my gold wa-atch to the one who gets it ri-ight."

"D, e, r, b, y, of course!" from Emmett. "That's English, you know!"

"D, a, r, b, y!" somewhat snappishly from Gem. "We see through the catch, with half an eye."

Mrs. Cameron's strident tone cleft the nonsense.

"I should think that regard for your husband would have dictated adherence to the method preferred by *him*. Especially as it is, I believe, the one universally adopted by other families of the name."

"You'll never gue-e-ss, if you try a-all ni-ight," continued the imperturbable Bertie. "Listen! E, n, r, o, u, g, h, t, y! 'Pon my honor, every letter of *that!* and then to be ca-alled '*Da-arby*'! It's worse than 'Chu-umley' for 'Chol-mon-de-ley,' and 'Beecham' for 'Beaucha-a-mp,' don't you know? The Virginians are great upon barba-arities like tha-at, you know. There's a fa-amily in Richmond called 'Tolliver'—"

"I beg pardon, Mr. Gates." Mrs. Cameron waved her hand imperiously.

"Beg yours, I'm sure," cocking his saucy head from his lowly position, "but I believe I have the flo-o-o-r."

A burst of laughter, louder and longer than the cause warranted, threatened to end ingloriously what everybody present appreciated as a wordy fencing-match.

"I know a man in our part of the country—" Mr. Wilkes was saying, when Mrs. Manly brought up her nerves to support her ally.

CHAPTER XX.

"My *dear* friends!" said the hostess, with a ghastly show of vivacity, yet with a certain assumption of the authority of her office not to be gainsaid. "In the name of my dearest foe, — to wit, my Idiosyncrasy, — I must entreat you to speak singly. All this is too interesting to lose, and I am not quite an Elizabeth Tudor, who could dictate two — or was it six? — letters at once to as many secretaries. I can listen to but one at a time. What were you saying, my dear Jane, about two ways of pronouncing Mrs. Dumaresque's name? How very-very droll!"

It was a master-stroke, but she could fight no longer in ambush. Her labored liveliness, the shrill break in her laugh, and her overacted ease betrayed sinister design. A red cloud swept over Karen's face and, in passing, took all the color with it. Mrs. Gillette leaned her head against the cushioned back of her chair, her eyelids quivering and lips of a

leaden-blue; Mr. Romeyn's eyes shone suddenly and wrathfully; Gem instinctively nestled her head against her friend.

Mrs. Cameron remained Gibraltar. Her voice was incisive and frosty.

"I was saying that Mrs. *Demarack* is singular in pronouncing her name as she does. But a stranger freak of fancy would be to pronounce D, u, m, a, r, e, s, q, u, e, *Kane!*"

No explosion ensued upon the projection of the shell. Mystification, pure and simple, appeared in every face except her daughter's and her cousin's. Karen continued to look directly at her, with the air of one courteously awaiting further information. Her effrontery provoked plainer speech. The woman of affairs cast away the foil, and laid hold of the honest broadsword.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" facing them as from the platform, "you are gathered here this evening for a purpose. I, for one, will be partaker in no man's — much less woman's — sins. Desperate diseases require prompt and unsparing measures. Yet, had not those connected with me by blood and affection been made the Victims of the Machinations I feel myself called upon by Conscience and Provi-

dence to expose, I might have held my peace even from good. I call upon the person who has passed herself off, and been passed off by Her *Mother*," — yet more cuttingly, — "as a Widow, to tell me, in your hearing, whether she did, or did not, elope with Another Man from her husband, eight years ago. Also, if the Said Husband, having exchanged the Name she had dishonored for that of Kane, did, or did not, visit her within a week, to implore her to join him in an application for a Divorce, that she might marry the Partner of her Flight — or, perhaps, yet Another Man! No Heroics, I beg, Madame!" — in precisely the tone she had known to strike dumb the "bad subject" of Orphan Asylum or Reform School. "I demand a Categorical Answer — 'Yes' or 'No' — to my questions."

With gentle hands that were yet like steel, Karen put aside the soft clinging of Gem's arms, drew herself to her full height, and looked down upon her accuser. She lifted her hand before speaking.

"You shall have it! NO!"

The scene that followed could never be described by any of the actors. When the bloody mist cleared from Karen's vision, and

the alarum bells ceased to deafen her ears, Gem was kneeling by her, her face buried in the folds of her chaperon's gown, and sobbing convulsively; Bertie held one of Mrs. Dumaresque's hands, and Mrs. Dale the other; Mr. Wilkes was shaking hands with Mrs. Gillette, and his wife was patting Karen's shoulder as she would soothe a terrified, *good* child.

Emmett's voice, deep with indignation, silenced the clamor of tongues.

"I demand," and, as he secured a hearing — "I *demand*, since allusion has been made to my wife, that this matter be sifted to the bottom. Knowing, as I do, the horrible injustice done by what we have been forced to hear, to one of the noblest, truest, purest women the Judge of all ever allowed to suffer for the sin of another, — I should be beneath the contempt of any one here if I did not insist upon an explanation of the monstrous charge brought against her by Mrs. Morgan's mother."

With a little cry, Clara shut out with her hands the sight of the face transfigured out of the likeness she knew by suppressed fury. It was as unfamiliar and dreadful as the roughened tone that smote her like a blow.

Mrs. Cameron was about to speak, her stony orbs unwinking under his blazing glance, when Captain Dale came forward. His fine features were expressive of sincere concern, but he spoke with gentle dignity.

"One moment, if you please," bowing to Mrs. Cameron before addressing Emmett. "May I suggest that Mrs. Gillette and Mrs. Dumaresque be permitted to retire? It is surely needless to subject them to further pain."

Mrs. Gillette did not take his proffered arm. She searched his face anxiously.

"If I go, who will vindicate my child?" said the feeble voice. "She has only me. Nobody else knows all."

Ten minutes had done ten years' work upon her. Her eyes were sunken, her lips of a purplish pallor.

"I will!" Emmett's voice rang out defiantly.

"And I!" responded Captain Dale, quietly impressive. "Major Kane is my friend. I am in his confidence. Mrs. Dale and I will go up to your room with you."

The mother arose obediently. As Karen would have followed, Gem flung herself upon her neck.

"O my darling! my darling! that look on your face breaks my heart. And to think that you should have been so hurt here! *here!* You know I would lay down my life to undo it all. Nothing and nobody, not all the iron-hearted, murderous-tongued saints in the universe, could make me believe anything against you, my love! my beauty! my poor, poor dear!"

She was crying bitterly, and the Wilkes sisters wept in sympathy.

Karen lifted the pretty young head from her bosom, and looked into the rain-drenched face with a smile too mournfully sweet for tears.

"I never doubted you, sweetheart. I never can doubt you! May the dear GOD bless you for what you have been to me!"

She pressed her lips to the pure forehead and trembling lips, kissed the cheeks of the weeping sisters, and left the room with Mrs. Dale.

"Highly theatrical!" sneered Mrs. Cameron, coolly, her eyes upon the closing door.

"The drama is of your selection, Madame!" retorted her son-in-law, hotly.

"I think"—Mr. Romeyn spoke for the

first time since the recitation of 'Lasca'—"we would do well not to discuss this matter in Captain Dale's absence. He has, unless I mistake, the key to the mystery. He asked me to wait for him here."

Mrs. Cameron unrolled her hempen network. Her inscrutable visage, if it said aught, told of immeasurable reserves of will. If weaker natures elected to dash themselves into froth and spume against her bulwarks, they had only themselves to blame. Nobody else looked up or moved until the Captain reappeared without his wife. Mrs. Gillette had had a fainting fit upon reaching her room, and he had summoned a physician sojourning in the hotel. The patient had revived, but was still so ill that Mrs. Dale thought it wise not to leave Mrs. Dumaresque alone with her.

"I regret, unspeakably, the necessity for repeating what my old comrade, Major Kane, confided to me on the last night of his stay with me," he continued. "Until then, I was ignorant of the leading events of his domestic life."

He stood upon the rug at one end of the hearth, his arm on the mantel, having de-

clined Mrs. Manly's offer of a chair as pointedly as was consistent with his invariable courtesy, — an action that classed him, in Mrs. Cameron's mind, with the benighted and enslaved masculine opposition.

"I have no more inclination than others present to prolong a story for which most of us were totally unprepared."

Involuntarily Bertie glanced at his scarred knuckles, and a light burst upon Gem's mind.

"I could have gone down upon my knees, then and there, and kissed them, court-plaster and all!" she said, many months later, when her suspicions as to the cause in which he had dealt the blow were verified. "I was certain that vile wretch, whose impudent grin I shall never forget, had slandered the sweet angel, and you had knocked the words back down his throat. I am *glad* I happened to see how cleverly you did it!"

Now, her fast returning tears blotted out everything, even Captain Dale's face, while he told his story.

"Mrs. Dumaresque's husband was an officer in the United States army, and, I have heard, a remarkably handsome, accomplished, and fascinating man. She loved him so

passionately, and trusted him so fully, that his elopement with the wife of his most intimate friend — then Captain Thomas Kane Scott — now Major Thomas Scott Kane — was a complete surprise. She had been married but four years. She came home to her mother, and has remained with her ever since. For six out of the eight years of her virtual widowhood she lived in the strictest seclusion. At Mrs. Gillette's request, she had altered the pronunciation of her name as a partial screen against idle and malicious curiosity. It was also to gratify her mother that she mingled again, by degrees, in society. Mrs. Gillette has resided for seven years in New York City, where her daughter's sad history was less likely to be known than in a gossiping college town. Her talents, her beauty, her wonderful magnetic power, have been used for others' happiness. Her successes in the social world are as nothing compared with the love and admiration she inspires among the suffering poor, to whom is given most of the time she can spare from her mother.

"Captain Dumaresque resigned his commission to save himself from expulsion from

the corps he had disgraced. When Miss Gillette married him, she refused to have her handsome fortune settled upon herself. Upon this, he is now living abroad with Mrs. Scott. His wife has been urged to apply for a divorce, but she will not listen to the suggestion. She holds that death alone can dissolve a marriage. She goes further, and declares that nothing but death can absolve her from obligation to love her husband. She told Major Kane last week that should Captain Dumaresque come back to her now, and profess penitence, she would follow him to the world's end. I do not comment upon this. Hers is, perhaps, an exceptionally constant nature, as well as exceptionally strong.

"Major Kane came to Mackinac, not knowing that she was here. He recognized her the night of his arrival, but left the Island next morning, without speaking to her, for a week's fishing at 'The Snows.' Their encounter at Fort Holmes was accidental. She covered his embarrassment as only she can relieve the awkwardness of a false position. He sought an interview, a day or two later, during which he argued the expediency of an application for divorce on her part, that

she might be free in fact, as in feeling, and permit Dumaresque to marry Mrs. Scott. Kane's is a tender heart, but his wife's faithlessness has sensibly abated his love. He pities her, and would let her misconduct be forgotten by the world. While the partner of her flight remains legally bound to another woman, it would avail nothing toward this end were Mrs. Scott to be divorced. A warm debate took place between Kane and Mrs. Dumaresque, in which he failed to alter her views. Lest her mother should suspect in whose company she had been, and the matter of their talk, she made haste, after parting with him, to change her dress and show herself in the drawing-room as usual.

"'The bravest, best, deepest-hearted woman I ever knew!' Kane said to me, in telling at length what I have condensed. 'But while her husband lives, and she is not formally separated from him, she is a target for cruel shafts. She cannot hide forever behind an assumed name. Her position is unnatural and painful. It will become dangerous some day.'

"I recalled the remark to-night, when I caught a few words spoken by a knot of

waiters as I passed through the rotunda. They prepared me for the behavior of those who were proud, twenty-four hours ago, to be numbered among Mrs. Dumaresque's acquaintances. A woman stopped me on the stairs just now to say that she 'had seen Mrs. Dale in the hall, in company with *that* Mrs. Dumaresque, and to warn me, as a friend, that she was a horrid impostor and unscrupulous adventuress.' I answered *her*, but all of us combined cannot stay the tide of scandal."

"I have known Karen Gillette since I was sixteen years old — a boy in the grammar school," said Emmett, hoarsely. "My own sister is not dearer to me, nor my wife's honor more sacred than hers. Where did you pick up this infernal pack of lies?"

He wheeled savagely upon his majestic mamma-in-law, roused out of all semblance of respect by what he had heard, and by reminiscence.

Gibraltar was dry and composed, when everything else of feminine mould in the room was trembling into tears.

"The woman who puts herself in an equivocal position should be ready to sustain the

consequences of her misdemeanor," she enunciated. "Your sisterly intimate, Mrs. De*mar*ack, cannot hope to be an exception to every rule. Had the appearance of evil been avoided by her and her mother, we should have been spared the very disagreeable revelations of this evening. Regrets are useless. The only thing left for us to do is to drop the matter, for the present, and bid Mrs. Manly good night. She has had altogether too much excitement for one so delicate."

This was obvious. Fan, smelling-salts, and a stout will had scarcely sufficed to maintain a passable degree of composure in the occupant of the sofa. At this direct allusion to her health, she began to sob and giggle in alternate convulsions of strangulation.

"Hysterics!" cried practical Mrs. Wilkes, and a mandatory flourish of her hand sent the men to the door.

"She *shoo-ed* us out like a flock of he-ens, be Jawve!" Bertie reported subsequently to Mrs. Dale. "I made the fastest time, being a li-ight weight, but none of us stood upon the order of our going. We went at o-once—don't you know?"

The agitated patient was left to ether and

to Fanny, — the latter having been sought far and diligently before she was found promenading the cliff, in company with the jaunty mulatto, — and Gem, white and sad, was making her arrangements to sleep on the sofa, when Mrs. Cameron and Clara sought the upper story.

At her own door the daughter wavered.

"Mamma!" she whispered, fearfully. "Emmett may be up soon. I am positively afraid to meet him! What ought I to tell him? Can it be possible that we are mistaken, after all?"

"Mistaken!" Mrs. Cameron disdained concealment. The chest baritone rendered the syllables roundly. "Only in supposing that three honest women could outgeneral such an adept in deceit. I disbelieve every word of that tale. Captain Dale did not dare repeat it in his wife's hearing. That was why she was left up stairs. The Creature has them all in her toils."

The door opened abruptly and widely from within. Emmett accosted his wife in the accent of a master.

"I am waiting for you, Clara! Good night, Mrs. Cameron!"

Gibraltar heard the key turn in the lock,

and paused, almost persuaded by dignity and maternal devotion to knock and force a third into their counsels. Prudence prevailed: but the hatchet Emmett had dug up and flung was never buried.

CHAPTER XXI.

EMMETT set a chair for his wife, and one for himself in front of it. His face was rigid, and Clara noted what she had never seen until now, — that his lower jaw projected slightly beyond the upper. It gave him an expression of fierce resolve out of keeping with her preconceived ideas of his character. She was not really afraid of him, although she had said so to her mother, but there was a sense of strangerhood quite as oddly oppressive.

"Now," he said, magisterially calm, "I am ready to hear how *my wife* happened to be mixed up in this diabolically dirty affair. That it was a plan, deliberately laid, and that Mrs. Manly's invitation to us was a part of it, is apparent to all of us who innocently helped to carry it out. You were in there with those two women, a tacit accomplice — unless you can protest, as Gem did, that you were not taken into confidence. Whose

brewing was the devil's broth? And why must your mother undertake to stir it?"

The Jane Cameron spirit asserted itself in the listener. Coarseness was insolence. The resemblance to her mother was appalling as she pushed her chair a foot further away, and, with flattened back and level chin, looked squarely into his eyes. Her tone had the sustained *timbre* of the Pride of Lisbon.

"You are choice in your expressions. When you remember that you are a gentleman, and I a lady, I will answer you."

"You will answer me *now!*" His chin was more prominent, and the shallow hardness of his voice more perceptible. Otherwise he gave no sign of increasing excitement. "The whole house is seething and fuming with this detestable stuff: and I will know who is responsible for it. As sure as I am an honest man, who is pledged by every law of right and honor to defend a slandered woman, I believe your mother set the devilish machinery going."

"Profanity and vulgarity are so new to me that I may be excused for insisting upon a different approach to the subject," maintained Mrs. Cameron's pupil, stonily.

"If you do not wish to provoke real profanity, you would better be direct and truthful. As to vulgarity, it has never been my ill-fortune to listen to grosser indecency than was served out to a mixed company this evening by Mrs. Cameron."

Clara was an upright woman, and a loyal child to the Model upon which she had fashioned herself. Upon this exceedingly broad hint she spake, diction and manner reflecting credit upon her preceptress.

Without blenching, — even gaining spirit as she rehearsed her wrongs, — she went over, in order, the proofs of Mrs. Dumaresque's guilty manœuvres, and his weakness, to her husband's face, from the first exchange of glances between balcony and piazza, to the present hour, when he stood arrayed as Karen's sworn champion against his wife and her God-fearing mother.

She told the oft-conned story well, and he heard it in profound silence. Only a transient gleam in the eyes fixed upon her face, and one purple, throbbing vein between the brows, revealed emotion. He neither hindered nor helped the narration. She had fair swing and, so far as natural indications went, patient audience.

When she ceased to speak, he got up, walked once slowly across the room, his hand to his chin, as if buried in deep thought. Returning, he stood by the chimney, looking curiously down at her, — such mixture of sorrowful incredulity, amazement, and stern displeasure in his gaze as nerved her to prepare for an outburst. She stirred restlessly in her chair.

"Well!" in her mother's best tone. "Have you any explanation to offer? A stare, however expressive and long, can hardly be accepted as rebutting evidence."

"And this is *my wife!*" He said it hollowly, as in a dream. "This is my wife! We were married a little over a month ago!"

He turned away abruptly, jerked open the shutters, and stepped out upon the balcony.

The band was playing in the Casino, some hundreds of feet away, but Clara could distinguish the air: —

> "O fair Dove! O fond Dove!
> O Dove with the white, white breast!"

As upon the night of the thunder-storm, the beat of feet upon the floor, the hum of voices, the ebb and flow of the night-wind,

made up a rhythmic accompaniment to the old, sad tune.

In the miserable, mechanical way in which the mind toys with trifles in supreme moments, she found herself recalling the words in following the cornet that rendered the theme:—

> "My love he stood at my right hand,
> His eyes were grave and sweet."

As Emmett's eyes would never be again to *her!*

A sob strangled her, but she would not give it vent. She had done no wrong. The Searcher of hearts knew the righteousness of her cause and the integrity of her intentions. Her husband, and not she, was the one who should sue for pardon.

He came back as suddenly as he had gone out. He left the window open, and the music wailed in after him.

"I will take your indictments in order." Standing, as before, by the hearth, he spoke sternly; his eyes were pitiless.

"*First:* Mrs. Dumaresque was startled at seeing me on that first day. We had not met in ten years. All that she had suffered in that time surged in upon her in the surprise of the recognition. Nor did she wish

that I should refer in others' hearing to her unhappy marriage, or ask questions as to her change of name.

"*Second:* She told me on the way to St. Ignace that she was separated from her husband; that he had left her and would never return. The story was not known to new acquaintances, and she dreaded discussion of it and heartless gossip. But she asked me to tell you all she had confided to me. She said you looked like a woman whose discretion could be trusted. I thought it safer not to speak of the sad complication for awhile. If questions were put to you, you had nothing to conceal, nothing to embarrass your answers. As to the disguise of name and the curtained episode in her life, she was right, as usual, I said. Even my wife, while she was a model of discretion, might find it difficult to parry the catechism of hotel gossips, were half the history, and not all, known. Some day, when you and she had become the fast friends I hoped you would be, she could tell you her story in her own way. I believed you would prefer this.

"*Third:* My remark upon her wedding-ring and her reply need no comment after what

Captain Dale has said of Mrs. Dumaresque's peculiar views on the subject of divorce.

"*Fourth:* As to the many admiring glances I have bent upon her, and my open enjoyment of her society, my frequent allusions to college days and our old intimacy, my appeals to her for legend and song and recitation, and my applause of the same, — all this was as frank as it was innocent. To her I am a boy who reminds her of earlier and happier days. That is my only claim upon her regard. Nothing could make this clearer to the mind of either of us. The affection I have for her is precisely the same in kind that I feel for Mrs. Gillette.

"*Fifth:* I turned deadly pale when I had made her horse rear, and put her in peril of her life. What man would not — even had the woman endangered by his carelessness been his maiden aunt, or" — a sardonic smile distorting his handsome face — "his mother-in-law?

"So much for defence. Now for recrimination. Mrs. Gillette is the victim of a disease that must end fatally. Any shock or excitement may make this end imminent. She is extremely ill this moment — so ill that Mrs.

Dale and Mrs. Wilkes will not leave her room to-night. You, — and your mother, — aided and abetted by your silly cousin, have probably done one innocent woman to her death. You have certainly blasted the reputation of another as innocent, and whose sorrows should have won you to sympathy, even if none of you are capable of appreciating her heroism, her filial devotion, and the blameless, beneficent life of a *true* Christian. The mantle of pious charity would seem to be out of fashion in your church."

The gibe stung bitterly.

"Until the matter was mentioned in Mrs. Manly's room to-night, not one of us three dropped a word derogatory to Mrs. Dumaresque, in the hearing of a fourth person. Mamma is incapable of such conduct as you impute to her."

Regardless of the torrent of tears that welled up with the denial, he bowed ironically.

"To Mrs. Cameron's daughter, I can only say, in reply, that hotel talk freely quotes that worthy lady and Mrs. Manly as authority for the most damaging stories afloat concerning Mrs. Dumaresque, and gives them credit for

unmasking a cunning conspiracy against the peace and purity of fashionable society! Unless I add that every charge brought forward by Mrs. Cameron this evening was retailed to Bertie Gates, two or three hours before we heard it, by a dissolute fellow of the baser sort, and Mrs. Cameron cited as endorser. Bertie knocked the liar down, but I shall make it my business to see him in the morning, and repeat the lesson."

"I beg you will not!" holding up a white, agonized face. "Ask mamma — ask Mrs. Manly — if we did not agree that nothing should be underhanded, that every chance should be given Mrs. Dumaresque for self-defence — "

— "Consistent with the indulgence of a ladylike taste for carrion! I do not doubt it. Nor the rectitude of your motives. If this end has been brought about with the best intentions, Heaven save me from becoming the object of deliberate wrong-doing! Don't sit up for me! I am going out for a walk. Probably a long one. I could not sleep."

All this had passed so quickly that Clara, hearkening to the echoes of his departing

footsteps, lost them in the refrain the cornet was still playing:

"O fair Dove! O fond Dove!
O Dove with the white, white breast!"

The house was still: the wind brought to her open window the wash of the waves on the shingles, when, weary and sick, she threw herself, yet in her evening dress, upon her pillow, still listening vainly for feet that came not all the night.

Emmett watched out the dark hours, and saw the day break in pearl and topaz and rose-color, lying prone under the balsam covert upon the ledge where he and his bride had read *Anne* "for three beatific hours one golden, balmy afternoon," in the second quarter of their honeymoon.

CHAPTER XXII.

MORE wonderful things are happening every day than that I should have met Mr. and Mrs. Gates upon their wedding tour last summer.

Nor was it extraordinary that they took in Mackinac during the two months' trip that extended over two-thirds of the continent.

The strange element of the "happening" was that we ran full against one another at the base of Friendship's Altar, on the anniversary of the famous pedestrian party given in Mrs. Emmett Morgan's honor.

"It is a pilgrimage," Gem said, her tender blue eyes wistful and deep with memories. "We planned to be here to-day."

She wore a piquant sailor-hat, and a tailor-made gown of the same color she had sported on the day they celebrated. A cluster of maiden-hair fern was in her hand. Some sprays, selected from this, were fastened in the side of Bertie's cap.

"I have matches and tinder in my pocket for ma-a-king a fire in Scott's Ca-ave — don't you know?" observed the bridegroom.

His moustache had secured a local habitation, if not a name; his cheeks had the contour of a shapely pear, rather than the cherubic round that used to suggest an apple. The lithe figure, ingenuous eyes, and boyish laugh were unaltered; but his joyousness had a fuller ring than in the days of irresponsible bachelorhood. His behavior to his little wife was the prettiest thing imaginable, if I except her reception of his graceful *devoirs*. One grew more hopeful of the world's future in beholding their happiness.

As we looked about for a convenient resting-place in the shadow of the great rock, Gem quoted from the legend of The Six Friends:—

"'They sat down upon fallen trunks and upon mossy stones, and talked long and lovingly of what each had felt and suffered, and, above all, *done* since their last parting.' One of the loveliest things *we* have done was to spend a whole fortnight with Her at Newport last month."

They told me all about it, while we lingered there. The golden-green light shivered upon Bertie's bared blond head, and flashed against the new ring upon Gem's hand. A weak, low wind moved the balsam-trees to sigh and fragrance. The tale of the bright young creatures who, in talking, now and then touched the gray, grim Altar, as in caress, was a duet upon a theme dear to us all.

I had seen a notice of Mrs. Gillette's death at her home in New York, a week after Mrs. Cameron's visit to the Island. I learned, now, that Bertie and Grace Wilkes, the latter at Karen's urgent invitation, had accompanied them to the city. Bertie gave me an account of the evening sail from Mackinac.

"She wouldn't go below," he said, "but had her invalid-chair taken on deck. Mrs. Dumaresque was on one side of her, Grace Wilkes on the other, you know. Not one of us spoke until the chains and tiers of electric lights that meant the big hotel drew closer and closer together, as we sailed away, and were at last fused into one monstrous star, pulsating like a fiery heart, don't you know? Then, she said in the low, sweet voice that

never got old and thin, you know: 'You called her once "Pearl and Princess of Islands," daughter. She is a glorious ruby to-night.' And, partly to herself — 'Beautiful for situation! A bride adorned for her husband! You said that evening — little flatterer! — that I always had the right words ready. None but the old, old words come to me now! I suppose because I learned them when I was young.'"

The next chapter of the tale was entirely new to me. On the day of her mother's funeral Karen received news of her husband's death in St. Petersburg, of small-pox. The woman whose fair, false face had ruined him deserted him when the character of the disease was discovered. He died in a hospital, and was hurried into the earth by hireling hands. By a will made a year before his decease, and entrusted to the American consul at Paris, the wreck of her once handsome fortune was bequeathed to his wife.

"She accepted this as evidence that he would have come back to her in time, had he lived," said Gem. "But she would not touch the money. She settled it upon Grace Wilkes. You know she was married —

didn't you? She was staying with Karen at Newport when she met her fate. 'How does Karen look?' Lovelier and more queenly than ever in the widow's mourning she will never lay aside —

"*Bertie Gates!*"

"My lo-ove?"

"I know what you mean when you tug your moustache with the left hand! You would contradict me if you dared!"

"You haven't asked after Romeyn," drawled the unabashed husband, ostentatiously irrelevant. "My wi-ife may consider the discussion of that one of her particular favorites a sa-afer topic — don't you know? He spent his summers at Newport, too. He was ve attentive to us. Came to see us every ty, and spent next-to-every evening with . For the sa-ake of Auld Lang Syne — don t you know?"

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